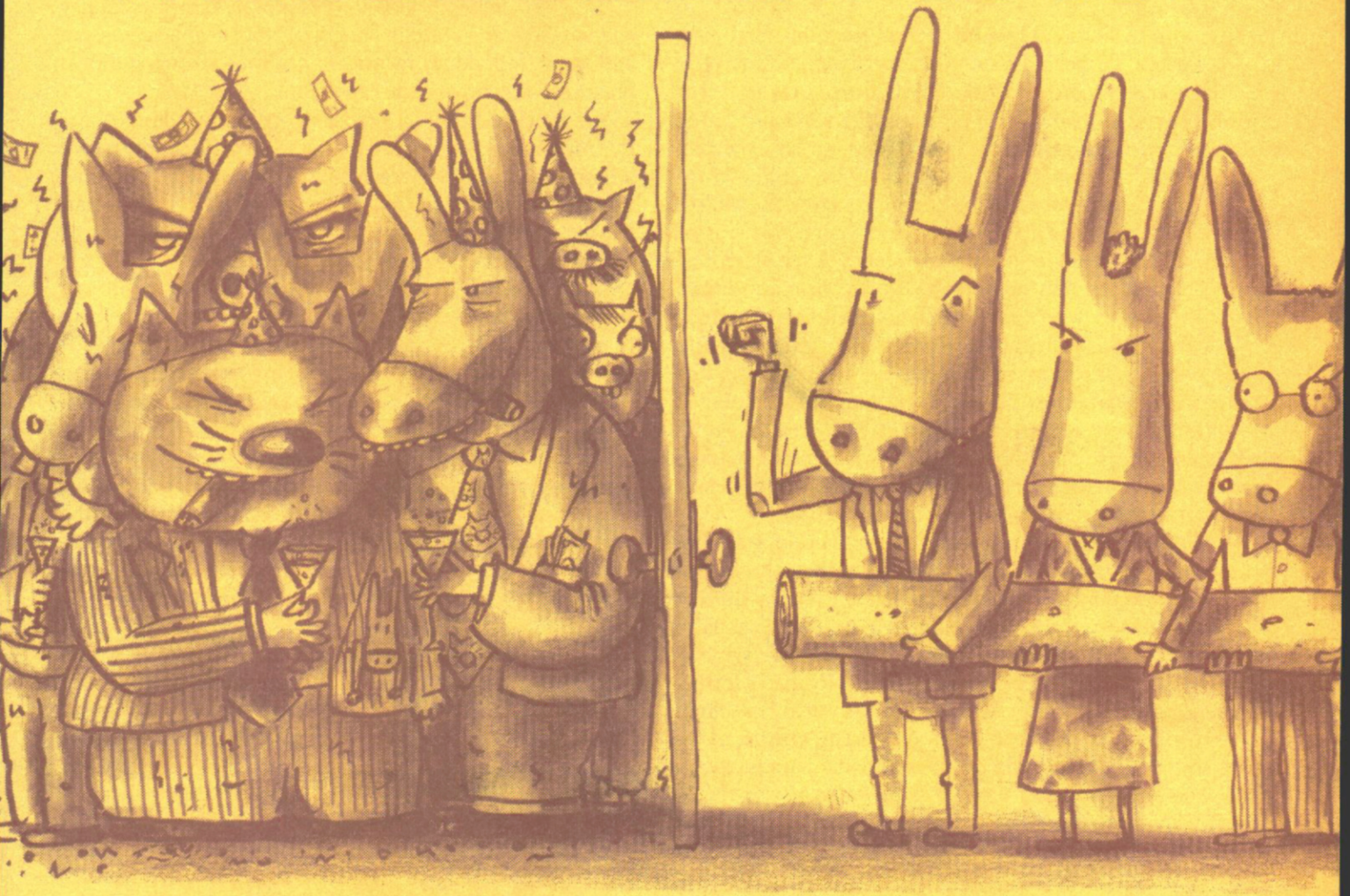
DOUBTS ABOUT AIDS WONDER DRUGS

February 3-16, 1997

In THESE TIMES

WHOSE PARTY IS IT?



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The Progressive Caucus takes on the Democratic establishment.

Joel Bleifuss reports

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EDITORIAL

A PRESIDENCY ADRIFT

As Bill Clinton begins his second term, his final campaign lies behind him. Now that he doesn't have to spend a major portion of his time currying favor with those who paid for his elections, the real Bill Clinton will be free to emerge into the light of day—or so some people seem to believe. Others, like Garry Wills, writing in the *New York Times Magazine*, seek more concrete clues to the president's behavior in the next four years. Wills asks: "Does Clinton really believe in anything?" After presenting strong arguments that he doesn't, Wills concludes that, in fact, the answer is yes: Even if Clinton believes in nothing else, Wills writes, he does believe in government.

But what does this mean? How could any politician, and especially one who has dedicated his entire life to running for president, not believe in government? The real questions are whom government should serve, what principles should underlie governance, and what responsibility politicians have to the constituencies that put them in office.

In Clinton's case, the answers to these questions are not commendable, unless you are a member of the corporate or financial elite that provided the money and media support he needed to win. Somewhere in the middle of his first term, Clinton detached himself from his party—a move symbolized by his turning for cover and advice to Reagan's former press secretary, David Gergen, and to the venal consultant Dick Morris. Clinton's re-election strategy was to move toward the right. He could do so safely only because labor, African-Americans and women had nowhere else to go, given Clinton's lock on their party's nomination. And now he has revived Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s Cold War rhetoric about governing from the "vital center."

Clinton's vacuous inaugural address was a good measure of the vitality he has found in rising above his party. It was a speech long on wind, short on substance and almost entirely lacking in the promise of a better life for the great majority of Americans. This speech was the culmination of a life dedicated to becoming president, and it reflected the terrible cost to personal integrity and principle that the process imposes on politicians committed only to their own advancement.

Starting as a liberal populist governor, Clinton learned early on about the power of large corporations to defeat reforms that hurt their bottom lines. He tried to improve Arkansas' roads at the expense of the truckers who abused them, to clean up the environmental damage done by Tyson's dirty chickens and by Weyerhaeuser's clear-cutting of the state's forests, and to reduce the high price of electricity by forcing power companies to rebate overcharges. These attempts cost him re-election after his first term. At that point, there were two paths open to him: He could try to mobilize popular support against the business elite, or he could accommodate himself to its power, accept its money and backing, and serve its interests. Not surprisingly, as an ambitious individual in a state without strong political organizations, he took the easier path.

At a time when media exposure—and the ability to raise big money to pay for advertising—has become more important than party organization and activity, the only exceptional element in Clinton's story is his skill in navigating the system. At the end of his career, little remains of whatever principles he may once have had.

In his speech to the Democratic National Convention in August, the Rev. Jesse Jackson made the astute comment that the shape of Clinton's second term would be determined not by the president, but by the activity, or lack of activity, of the various forces that make up the left in the American political arena. Jackson drew analogies to Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, both of whom campaigned as conservatives but were swept up in the popular demands of their days and became liberal icons.

Clinton has forgotten that strong parties, not the center, are the source of political vitality.

The same could happen to Clinton, who is now adrift in a sea of platitudes. Clinton needs to be reminded that it is not the center, but the contesting forces of party politics that generate vitality. That is a lesson that labor and the leaders of other organized popular groups also need to act on. As Joel Bleifuss explains in this issue's "First Stone," there is the beginning of a truly vital left in the Progressive Caucus in the House of Representatives. The best hope for a renewal of party politics lies there, not in Clinton's vacuous "vital center." ◄

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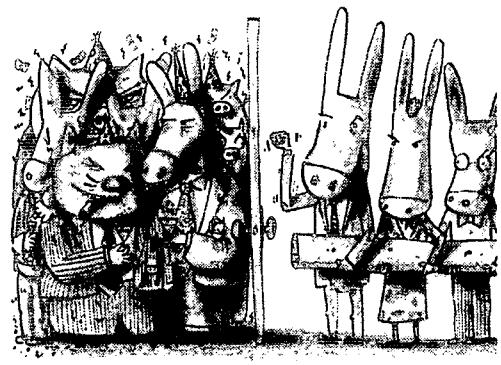
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In THESE TIMES

CONTENTS

Volume 21, Number 6



Whose party is it?

The Progressive Caucus takes on the Democratic establishment.

JOEL BLEIFUSS

12



Protease tease

New AIDS wonder drugs offer more questions than answers.

JEFFREY L. REYNOLDS

15

Hired guns

The Nigerian army prepares for another campaign on behalf of its patron, Shell Oil.

STEVE KRETZMANN

18

FEATURES

Welfare economics ◦ Katharine Sciacchitano 21
Industry wins on clean-air standards ◦ Jeffrey St. Clair 24
The WTO and labor rights ◦ David Moberg 27
Black leaders reconsider Ebonics ◦ Salim Muwakkil 29
In the End: The life of a dominatrix ◦ Lawrence Levi 40

REVIEWS

In Print: *Here's the Deal* ◦ Jordan Marsh 32
No Mercy ◦ Gina Neff 35

DEPARTMENTS

Letters 4
Sylvia · Nicole Hollander 4
In Short 6
Appall-O-Meter 7
The Big Picture · Lloyd Dangle 8
Huge Mouth · Peter Hannan 11

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LETTERS

Cheap shot

Every semester I ask students in my class on the Holocaust to collect the most ludicrous Nazi/fascist analogies that they stumble upon during the course of the semester. I am particularly fond of examples where both sides make tendentious and ill-conceived comparisons between their opponents and Hitler.

Given that, I couldn't help but notice Linda DeLibero's otherwise insightful review of *The People vs. Larry Flint* ("The Flynt follies," January 20), where she counters the absurd claim that *Hustler* is a liberating anti-fascist manifesto with the equally absurd claim that *Hustler*'s bestiality makes it secretly fascist. Certainly she is aware that the Nazi cultural purges were done in the name of anti-pornographic decency and that the Nazis killed that which they defined as parasitic rather than bestial. More importantly, neither the movie nor *Hustler* has anything to do with fascism. The Nazis committed horrendous political crimes in the name of a concrete political ideology. The seemingly endless barrage of shallow Nazi comparisons cheapens everyone involved, especially Hitler's many victims. These comparisons also obscure the nature of this hideous ideology, just as it is making a comeback in Europe and the United States.

DeLibero is one of your most interesting writers, but she should leave the cheap Nazi analogies to right-wing nutbags, talk-show hosts and drunken club-hoppers hassled by bouncers.

Shawn Kelley
Department of Religion and Philosophy
Daemen College
Amherst, N.Y.

More Trek talk

It may be a sad commentary on the condition of the American left that we debate the nuances of one-liners in popular films. However, as a democratic socialist, frequent viewer of Star Trek, wielder of a hot word processor and beater of dead horses, a few further comments on the letters by Robert J. Cromwell and Sharon Tremble (January 6) about *Star Trek: First Contact* are not entirely out of order.

Star Trek is essentially liberal, but not quite social democratic. Trek's producers have sympathetically dealt with racial discrimination, indeterminate prison sentences, gay rights, militarism, unionism and many other progressive issues. However, its fundamental schema is a huge United States, now an interplanetary federation. One segment in the original series supported American involvement in Vietnam. The ratings on "Deep Space Nine" were down for being too cerebral, so the producers generated more war-like action segments. Trek is unabashedly a huge commercial venture, replete with



SYLVIA by Nicole Hollander



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action figures and "memorabilia" galore; some of its main actors vie for glory and profits. All of this is consistent with good, staunch liberalism, occasionally of the Cold War variant, and we should be glad that mass audiences are exposed to such ideas. But democratic socialism it is not.

The Ferengi are supposed to represent excessive capitalist greed; but in making this salutary point, Trek has created an entire species of hominid-like beings whose main purpose in life is to accumulate wealth, cheat people, make misrepresentations, etc. Plainly, these traits have been laid upon the shoulders of Jews for centuries, and I often wince at the comparison between the Ferengi and Jews. Although the Ferengi are now inextricably intertwined with popular Trek plots, writers in the future, in sci-fi or any other genre, should be careful not to unintentionally portray entire peoples in a light that might be interpreted as anti-Semitic.

William J. Volonte
Iselin, N.J.

Stay off Wall Street

Your analysis of the blizzard of lies attacking Social Security is right on the money. However, given your recognition that Wall Streeters would be "the main beneficiaries" of privatizing it, it's strange that you still like the idea of investing part of the Social Security Trust Fund in the private market. Your justification—that borrowing from the fund somehow harms it—is puzzling; since our currency's link with gold was severed back in the '70s, all American dollars are just as much "government IOUs" as the Treasury bonds and notes in the trust fund.

John Glasel
Tenafly, N.J.

Will America fill up before it grows old?

Dean Baker's review of Pete Peterson's *Will America Grow Up Before It Grows Old?* ("Granny bashing," December 23) is sharp and thorough, and it shows that Peterson's unconvincing argument that Social Security and Medicare face collapse is just camouflage for the greed of Wall Street and others.

I enjoyed the review, but by the end of it my heart was sinking. Baker and Peterson seem to share the assumption that the economy and the population will continue to grow for the next 75 years at more or less the current pace. They only differ on the precise percentages, Baker's figures being more "optimistic" (i.e. higher) and perhaps more realistic. But Baker, and I presume Peterson, do not discuss whether such growth is itself a good thing.

It's pretty obvious that the United States is already too crowded, that the carrying capacity of the natural environment has already been reached in some areas, and that the quality of life in the cities and suburbs is declining. Moreover, a large part of current and future economic growth is based on the labor of people who are overworked (typically holding two underpaid jobs in the service sector) and overstressed as a result. I do not see how this country can continue to grow at anything like its current pace for 75 years and still be worth living in. If we could stop population growth and reverse it, what would that entail for the Social Security benefits of the ever-larger proportion of old people? And can we sustain economic growth without ruining more of the environment? I don't know the answers to these questions, but I feel pessimistic.

Michael Ferber
Durham, N. H.

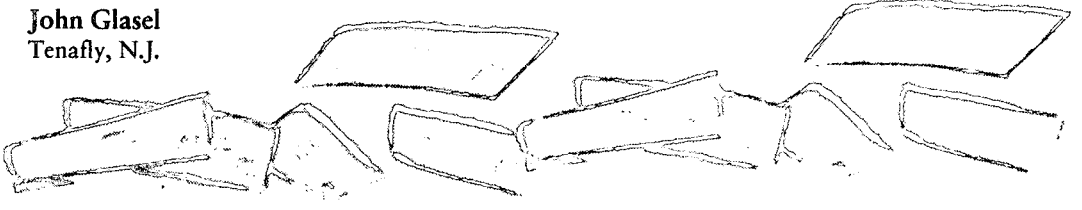
Stop the insanity

Although Joel Bleifuss' article "Warfare or welfare" (December 9) offered no fresh initiatives or strategies to cut military appropriations, it raised a few consequential points.

Caleb Rossiter, director of Demilitarization for Democracy, contributed a vital insight regarding the corporate dog wagging the Department of Defense tail. Certainly corporate greed, not national defense, is behind the socially debilitating Pentagon share of the public budget. Americans need to get that straight because it's costing them many jobs and undermining every facet of life from education to the environment. Rossiter is right again when he says pseudo-debates about military strategy are pointless and farcical. They are a device of the defense establishment to manipulate public discourse on defense questions. This establishment decides how much we taxpayers have to cough up each year for Uncle Sam to be ready, in today's chapter and verse, to fight two wars simultaneously. No discussion allowed.

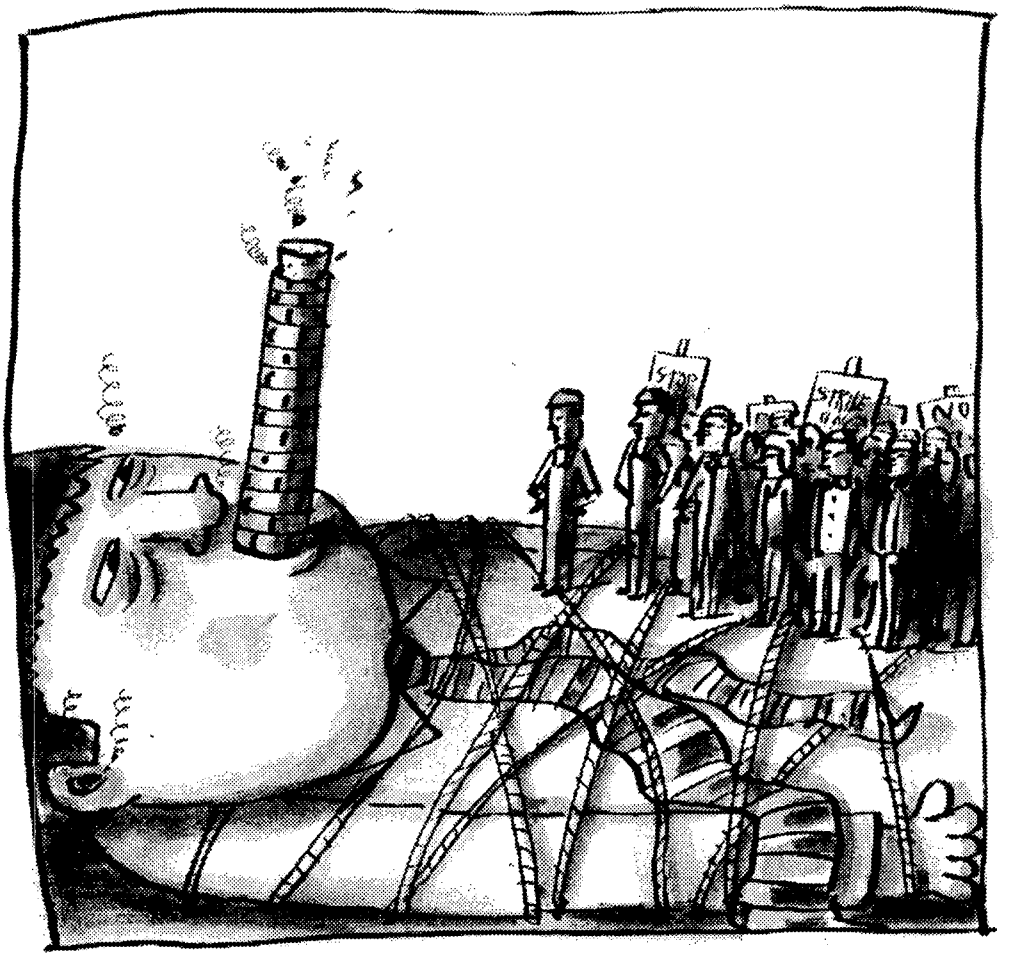
Instead of playing by their own rules, the military fatsos should be put on a forced diet, say $180 billion a year for starters, and gradually weaned from the public trough. The Pentagon should be told to manage on a fixed sum like the rest of us and deliver the best national defense possible within its allowance. But in reality, if you want to cut defense spending, you need to work for campaign finance reform. As long as millions from defense contractors and other wealthy donors slither into congressional and presidential pockets (and the media bellows about American military might), there's no hope of reining in excessive military spending.

John Otranto, CDR, USCG (Ret.)
Munich, Germany



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InSHORT



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Korean unions stand firm

For the past six weeks, hundreds of thousands of South Korean workers have gone on strike against a new labor law rammed through the country's National Assembly by the ruling party of President Kim Young Sam. The law imposes some of the most draconian controls on union activities in the industrialized world, while granting Korean employers new rights to fire workers during slowdowns and hire replacement workers during strikes.

Just hours after the law was passed on December 26, 150,000 workers represented by the outlawed Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) closed down the world's largest shipyard, stopped production at Hyundai Motors and three other major Korean auto manufacturers and shut down hospitals, rail transport and broadcasting companies throughout the country. After a brief lull over the New Year's holiday, unions aligned with the larger but more conservative Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) joined the strikes.

By mid-January, the strikes had cost the Korean economy more than $3 billion in lost production. Stung by the unity of the country's workers, the government resorted to traditional tactics of intimidation, threatening to arrest strike leaders and falsely accusing the unions of allying themselves with communist North Korea. But despite the disruptions, many Korean human rights, legal and religious organizations backed the unions in their criticism of the labor legislation and the Kim government. Finally, after meeting with the political opposition on January 21, President Kim backed down and agreed to send the controversial labor law back to parliament for review.

Although Korean workers are often regarded as industrial shock troops, the general strike of 1997 falls within a 50-year tradition of militancy. In the late '40s, a general strike against the autocratic rule of Syngman Rhee was put down by the U.S. Army and Rhee's secret police. In the '70s, the attempts of women textile and garment workers to form independent unions sparked a political crisis that climaxed when dictator Park Chung Hee was shot to death by the head of the Korean CIA. Park's successor, Chun Doo Hwan, led a systematic crackdown on the labor movement that finally ended in 1987, when millions of citizens poured into the streets demanding democracy.

Ironically, one of the leaders of that dissident movement was Kim Young Sam, who split with the opposition in the late '80s and formed a coalition with the military and business elite. Since becoming president in 1992, Kim's goal has been to make South Korea a full partner in the world economy. The new labor laws were supposed to bring South Korea—now the 11th largest economy in the world—in line

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with freedom of association and collective-bargaining standards established by the International Labor Organization. Last October, South Korea joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Paris-based group of industrialized economies known as the "rich man's club," on the understanding that its labor laws would soon conform to ILO standards.

But when a presidential commission on labor could not reach consensus on legislation, Kim's ruling party decided to act on its own, setting the stage for the dramatic events of December 26. In addition to allowing mass dismissals, the government maintained two provisions inconsistent with ILO standards. One provision, known as the third-party intervention law, was used in the past to go after religious activists involved with labor unions, but also bans union leaders from publicly supporting strikes at workplaces where they are not directly employed. A second provision banning dual unions effectively outlawed the KCTU, which was organized during the '80s as an alternative to the then pro-government FKTU. The KCTU represents about 500,000 workers, while the FKTU has about 1.2 million members.

During the Cold War, the AFL-CIO refused to work with the independent unions now represented by the KCTU, and in the process lost much credibility with Korean workers. But under the leadership of John Sweeney, the AFL-CIO has taken the international lead in supporting the Korean labor movement. That support, and pressure from groups like the OECD and the ILO, may offer the only chance to prevent another labor crackdown that would once again leave Korean workers without a voice and at the mercy of big business.

—Tim Shorrock

Túpac's last stand?

When the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) took more than 600 partygoers hostage at the residence of Japan's ambassador to Peru in December, the government of President Alberto Fujimori found itself in a bind at least partly of its own making. Since taking office in 1990, and especially after seizing near-dictatorial power in his 1992 "self-coup," Fujimori has sought to eliminate all organized opposition from the political scene, systematically undermining political parties, community groups and non-governmental organizations alike. But while the government has busied itself spying on the democratic opposition, armed groups like the MRTA—and the more violent Shining Path—regrouped their forces and sought to win favor with an increasingly disgruntled population.

The hostage-taking was a spectacular coup for the MRTA. It was not only well-planned and almost flawlessly executed, but the presence of several foreign ambassadors in the residence brought the international press scurrying to Peru. Ongoing media coverage has given MRTA free publicity worldwide—quite an achievement for a movement every-

Continued on page 9

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APPALL-O-METER

THE *IN THESE TIMES* INDEX OF INDECENCIES



By David Futrelle

Gates of hell 4.2



What if we're all just a thought in the mind of Bill Gates? "It's possible, you can never know, that the universe exists only for me," the unkempt cyberbillionaire speculated in a recent interview with *Time*—er, with *Time* the magazine, not time the metaphysical concept. "If so, it's sure going well for me, I must admit."

They put the "dip" in diplomat 7.2

Sometimes we miss the Cold War. The recent, widely reported incidents involving out-of-control diplomats from the former Soviet Union—one of whom apparently ran over and killed a girl while drunk—are only the tip of the iceberg, the *Village Voice* reports. According to the *Voice*, "ex-Soviet diplo-brats" in New York City "are apparently running wild in their upscale Riverdale neighborhood, urinating in public, scrawling swastikas outside the residences of Holocaust survivors, breaking car windows, tossing garbage in the streets, and harassing seniors." And that's not even counting the parking violations: The Russian Mission to the United Nations racked up some 14,436 summonses in the first half of 1996.

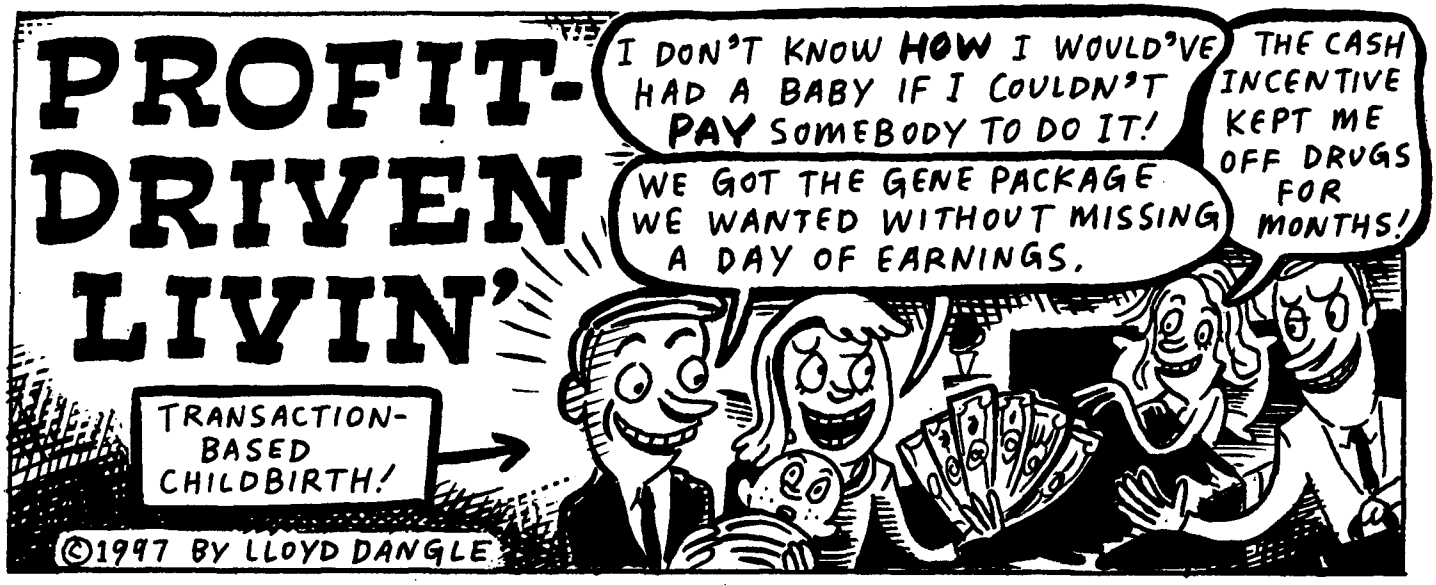
Fuhrmonics 6.4

Mark Fuhrman, whose silver tongue and sensitivity to diversity made headlines during the O.J. Simpson murder trial, has discovered a new word, one that starts with "f." "There's an old saying, 'You say fuck me, I say fuck you,' " the former LAPDer, now living in semi-seclusion in Idaho, explained to *Vanity Fair*. "Fuck you people. Now stand the fuck by. ... Who in the fuck are these people to pass judgment on me? I spent 20 years of my life serving these people. Now they get to sit around doing their jobs—'I'm a secretary, so I get to pass judgment on somebody.' Well, who in the fuck are you, lady? That pisses me off." Fuhrman also admitted to feeling a little underappreciated for the good work he did in the O.J. case. "Did anybody ever, like, clue in and figure out that they wouldn't have had a lot of their evidence had it not been for Mark Fuhrman?" he complained. "I kind of figure Marcia and Chris owe me 10 percent of whatever they make on their books."

End times 4.1

Some of the signs that the end of the world is near, collected from the Apocalypse Now Web site (http://bbs.annex.com/relayer/): a sudden surge in tuberculosis in Utah; an invasion of Waco, Texas, by several thousand Mexican free-tailed bats; mass suicide by some 60 Alaskan walruses; a report in the *British Medical Journal* that suggests doctors misdiagnose comas nearly half the time. After all this, the frogs and the locusts and the Mark of the Beast will be something of an anticlimax.

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Continued from page 7

one believed to be dead and buried.

Though Fujimori has publicly reiterated his refusal to negotiate with terrorists, some members of his Cambio 90 party have said they would support the MRTA's transformation into a legal political party. At one point, observers speculated that the MRTA would moderate its demands, but the group's leader, Néstor Cerpa, continues to insist on the release of some 400 of the group's members from Peru's nightmarish prisons. When asked whether he would be willing to settle for improved prison conditions, Cerpa said no, adding, "That isn't the reason we're here."

The MRTA's timing was impeccable. Fujimori's popularity rating had been sliding steadily over the past year, due largely to economic stagnation, high unemployment and rising gasoline prices. As the economy has eroded, Peruvians have become less tolerant of Fujimori's authoritarian ways. His support dropped from 74 percent in January 1996 to 41 percent in mid-December, just before the embassy takeover. His disapproval rating in the same period nearly tripled, from 17 percent to 48 percent.

The pro-government media in Peru has gone to great lengths to highlight the terrorist and mercenary nature of the MRTA. Press reports emphasize the group's tactics of kidnapping wealthy Peruvians for ransom and holding them in "people's prisons" (usually small underground holes), implying that the rebels' main objective is money, not political change.

Yet in the context of growing frustration over the course of the economy—and given the lack of alternative channels to express this discontent—some Peruvians have a different take on the MRTA. A series of unpublished opinion polls taken in Lima after the embassy takeover reveal that while most Peruvians condemn violent acts such as the embassy takeover, almost half of the poorest Peruvians see the MRTA as being concerned with their interests. Many poor people I spoke to in Lima's shantytowns and in the provincial city of Cuzco liked the idea of hundreds of the country's privileged elite being forced to endure hardships common to millions of poor Peruvians. As one resident of Villa El Salvador, a sprawling shantytown in southern Lima, put it, "Maybe going a few days without water and electricity will help the politicians learn what life is like for the majority of Peruvians."

—Jo-Marie Burt

The costs of incarceration

THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE RECENTLY ISSUED A report on one of the nation's hottest growth sectors: prisons. By the year 2000, the total number of inmates in federal and state prisons could reach 1.4 million. This represents a 24 percent increase over the 1995 prison population of more than 1.1 million inmates and a 320 percent increase over 1980's prison population of 330,000. According to the report, between 1980 and 1995, the rate of incarceration almost tripled, growing from 145 inmates to 428 inmates for every 100,000 U.S. residents. Imprisonment for drug offenses, the report reveals, accounts for 75 percent of this increase in the prison population.

But locking so many people up is expensive. Between 1980 and 1994, the cost of operating the U.S. prison system grew by 224 percent to $17.7 billion. By 2000, prison operating costs are projected to reach $25.5 billion, which is more than twice what the federal government plans to budget that year for higher education.

—Joel Bleifuss

Is NAFTA trucking jobs south?

According to a recent study by researchers at UCLA's North American Integration Development Center, the North American Free Trade Agreement has had "near zero" impact on jobs. The study's calculations show that 28,168 American jobs were lost due to increased exports under NAFTA, but 31,158 jobs were created due to increased exports, amounting to a net gain of 2,990 jobs. But a closer look reveals a much gloomier picture.

To begin with, the UCLA study did not count the additional 33,000 jobs lost in the last three years when factories relocated to Mexico, a statistical sleight of hand that makes

The invisible hand and vanishing species

THE FREE MARKET, IT TURNS OUT, CAN DO ANYTHING—EVEN PROTECT ENDANGERED SPECIES. Every two years, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a right-wing think tank, sends out its *Free Market Environmental Bibliography* to members of the American Library Association. The *Bibliography* explains: "While countless species have been extirpated from the face of the earth under government protection, no species whose members are both privately owned and commercially valued has gone extinct. Indeed, rather than a death warrant, putting a price tag on wildlife can guarantee its survival. So long as the rights of use and exclusion are well defined, secure and enforced—and wildlife markets are sufficiently free—an abundance of diverse wildlife will be supplied if it is demanded." —J.B.



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it easier for NAFTA supporters to argue that the agreement is not really hurting U.S. workers. The UCLA researchers excluded these job losses because, they reasoned, companies were moving to Mexico before NAFTA and have continued to do so at the same rate ever since.

In addition, NAFTA poses a threat to thousands of jobs that have not yet been exposed to the wonders of free trade. U.S. truck drivers, for example, traditionally have not had to worry about direct competition from foreign drivers. They do now. Opening borders to allow foreign competition in trucking is one of NAFTA's major objectives.

For more than a year, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters has been battling the Clinton administration and the U.S. trucking industry over a provision of NAFTA that would allow trucks carrying freight from Mexico to travel freely throughout the border states of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, and eventually anywhere in the United States. U.S. trucks would also be allowed to travel freely in Mexico. Currently, trucks from Mexico are limited to a 20-mile zone along the border, where their cargo is picked up by U.S. drivers for transport within the United States.

The Teamsters charge that U.S. companies are pushing this provision so they can take advantage of truck drivers from Mexico who make as little as $8 a day. "Why would U.S. trucking companies pay $19 an hour for U.S. drivers to haul freight from Monterrey to Houston when they will be able to hire a driver in Mexico for less than $19 a day?" asks Teamsters spokesman Steve Trossman.

According to the Teamsters, in the last few years, Roadway Express, J.B. Hunt and numerous other U.S. trucking companies have been forming partnerships with Mexican companies to move freight across the border. The NAFTA trucking provision, however, will effectively eliminate the need for U.S. drivers to pick up freight at the border, since trucks originating in Mexico will be free to make deliveries anywhere in the United States once the provision is fully implemented. "Clearly, this situation is going to kill thousands of jobs," warns Trossman.

The NAFTA trucking provision was scheduled to take effect in December 1995. But after the Teamsters and several environmental groups launched a public relations campaign warning of the safety hazards posed by Mexican trucks, President Clinton ordered Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena to delay enacting the new policy until the Department of Transportation could ensure that trucks crossing the border met U.S. safety standards.

The governors of California, Texas, Arizona and New Mexico—who claim that the safety issues have been addressed—have joined the American Trucking Association in calling for the ban to be lifted immediately. But the Transportation Department admits that safety concerns remain. U.S. officials are still negotiating with Mexico over these issues, according to Transportation Department spokesperson Bill Schulz, and President Clinton has not yet indicated when the trucking ban will be lifted.

Clinton has used the safety issue as political cover, but he may not be able to do so for much longer. As the administration seeks to expand NAFTA and promote a free-trade agenda this year, Clinton will be forced to honor the agreement he has already signed, even though he knows it will cost jobs. Politically, he will say, there is no other choice.

—Ron Bigler

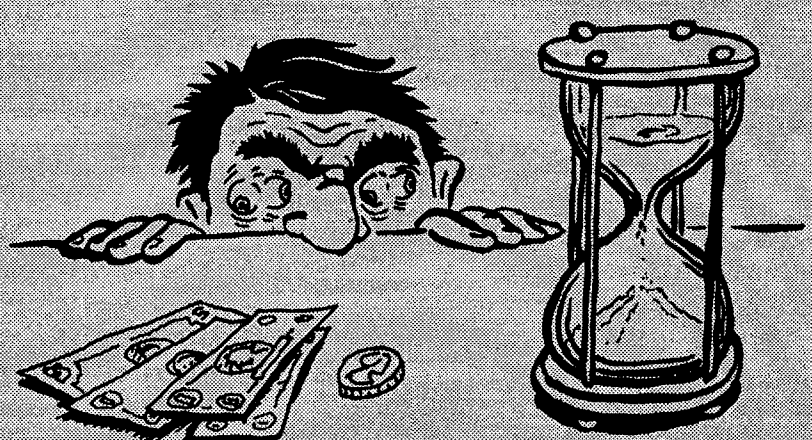
Romania's new anti-gay law

Alexandru wears eye shadow. On the streets of Bucharest, that's enough to get an elbow in the ribs. At the handful of informal gay meeting spots around the city,

Wages for living

EARLY IN JANUARY, THE ST. PAUL CITY COUNCIL JOINED THE MOVEMENT FOR A LIVING WAGE. THE COUNCIL VOTED unanimously to require companies receiving more than $100,000 in economic development subsidies to pay their employees a living wage. That wage is defined as 100 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of four—currently about $8.25 an hour. The living wage increases to 110 percent of the poverty level if health coverage is not included. The living-wage initiative was promoted by a coalition led by ACORN and Progressive Minnesota, the Minnesota affiliate of the New Party.

—J.B.



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homophobic thugs regularly launch late-night raids, terrorizing anyone who happens to be there. Gay men like Alexandru expect no protection from the city's police. Romanian laws on homosexuality have long been the toughest in Europe, and new amendments to the penal code have made them potentially even more severe.

"You have to be careful everywhere you go, all the time," says the 24-year-old waiter. "It's dangerous to be gay in Romania."

Under the hard-line dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu, same-sex relations—even in private, between consenting adults—were punishable with up to five years in prison. Hundreds of homosexual men served prison sentences, while many more were blackmailed by the secret police. If the country's mostly underground gay community thought life would be any easier after the fall of Ceausescu, they were sadly mistaken. Even after the 1989 revolution, Paragraph 200, Romania's notorious anti-gay law, remained in place, and the police routinely spied on, harassed, arrested, beat and even tortured gay victims.

In 1994, the Council of Europe made Romania's membership in its organization conditional upon repealing the ban. Ireland, Northern Ireland and Cyprus struck down similar laws in order to join. Late last year, after an emotional debate, the Romanian parliament grudgingly revised Paragraph 200. It scrapped the blanket ban on homosexual relations, but expanded other sections of the law to criminalize homosexual encounters that cause a "public scandal" and to punish those who "entice or seduce a person to same-sex acts." Also punishable by law are "propaganda, associations or other forms of proselytizing" with the same aim.

Human rights advocates say the new law's ambiguous wording leaves it open to elastic interpretation by Romania's intolerant police force and prosecutors. "The amended version of the law somehow meets the Council of Europe's conditions," says Ion Iacos of the Bucharest-based Romanian-Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. "But in fact it's so vague it's worse than the old one. I'm afraid we can expect even more violations than before." The new restrictions on association and expression, says Iacos, "ensure that there will be no gay organizations, no associations, no bars, no demonstrations, no theater performances, no nothing."

Nor can Romania's gays hope for much from the new democrat-led government that recently unseated the ruling ex-Communist Party after seven years in office. During the parliamentary debate over the law, the powerful Romanian Orthodox Church, as well as many politicians from across the political spectrum, bitterly contested any change in the law at all. Many democrats, including new President Emil Constantinescu, are close to the Orthodox Church and take even stronger anti-gay stands than the ex-Communists.

Nevertheless, part of Bucharest's small gay community is defying the authorities. One year ago, it formed the group Accept to organize for gay rights and provide a forum for Romania's gays. "The problem is not just the laws," says Bogdan, a co-founder of Accept. "It's the way the whole society thinks about homosexuality. And that won't change in the near future because there's no one who wants it to change."

—**Paul Hockenos**

SOURCES

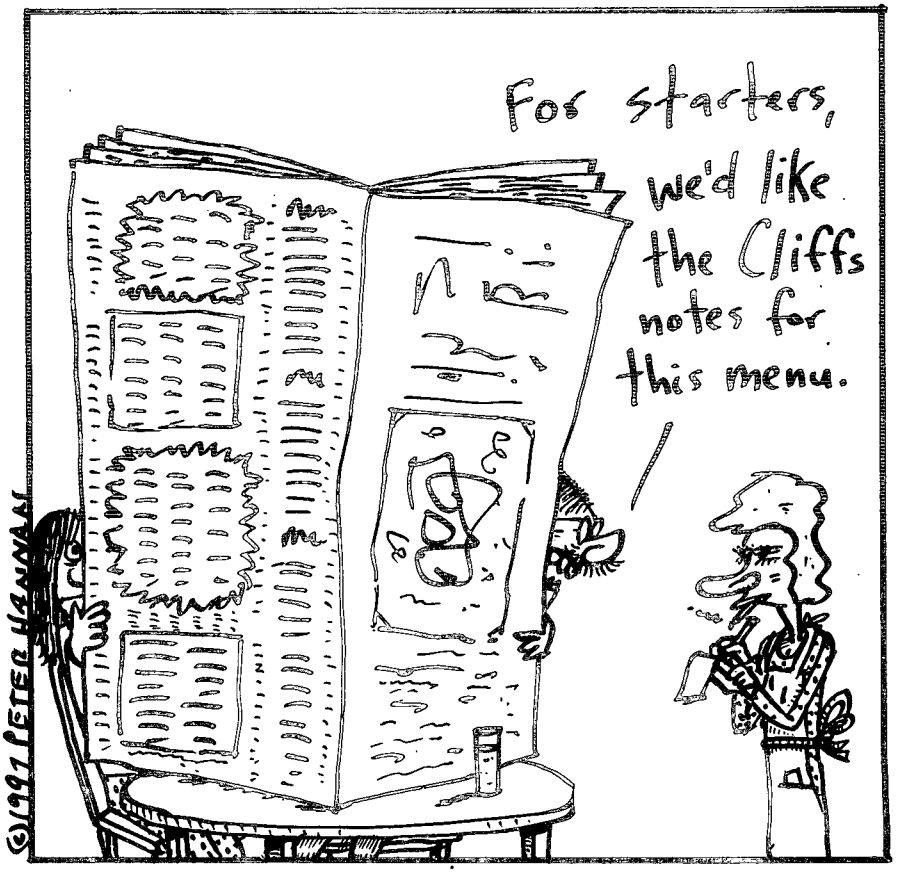
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THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH By Peter Hannan



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THE FIRST STONE

WHOSE PARTY IS IT?

By Joel Bleifuss

The Congressional Progressive Caucus has issued a public challenge to the Democratic Leadership Council for the heart and soul of the Democratic Party.

In Washington last December, DLC President Al From proclaimed victory for the "vital center" at the group's annual Policy Forum and Gala. In his introduction to featured speaker Bill Clinton, who helped found the conservative Democrats' club in 1985 when he was governor of Arkansas, From said the president had been re-elected, among other reasons, because he "reconnected the Democratic Party with its real tradition ... of economic growth and opportunity, not redistribution."

Once at the podium, Clinton heaped praise on the DLC partisans and "the truly stunning array of business leaders who are here today" who "fought for the life and the future of the Democratic Party." In a speech long on platitudes and short on specifics, Clinton continued: "A year ago when I spoke here ... I said the great question before us was: Can the center hold? ... The answer is clear: The center can hold, the center has held, and the American people are demanding that it continue to do so."

Freshman Democratic congressman Jim McGovern of Massachusetts thinks the American people are demanding no such thing. McGovern points to his victory over an "unbeatable" incumbent, Peter Blute, as proof that the majority of Americans will vote for a progressive, issue-oriented candidate who directly speaks to their concerns. (See sidebar.)

McGovern is one of the 10 or so newly elected Congress members who are expected to join the ranks of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. Defying conventional wisdom, all 51 caucus members who ran for re-election to Congress won. Today, the Progressive Caucus is larger than it has ever been in its six-year history.

As the victories of McGovern, Rep. Cynthia McKinney of Georgia and Sen. Paul Wellstone of Minnesota attest, the unreported story of the 1996 election is that progressive candidates who ran on the issues, rather than away from them, triumphed.

On January 9, McGovern, McKinney and Wellstone passed on the secrets of their success at the opening session of a Capitol Hill event billed as the Progressive Challenge. This day-long forum kicked off what its organizers promise will be an ongoing collaboration between the Progressive Caucus, 23 public interest groups (at last count), organized labor, left intellectuals and grass-roots activists. The speakers included such left luminaries as the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Richard Trumka and Noam Chomsky.

Rep. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Progressive Caucus chair, says progressives must "force debate on issues that conservatives and moderates prefer not to deal with." One issue that should be at the top of any serious national debate, he says, is the unfair distribution of wealth and income. The caucus will also continue its fight for a national health care system. "Health care," he says, "is a right, not a privilege." And progressives must address the fragility of American democracy, in which less than half the people vote, compared with 70 percent to 80 percent in Canada and Europe. Strengthening American democracy would entail not only reforming the campaign finance system, but giving potential voters a reason to go to the polls. Sanders also wants to address the subject of corporate control of the media. "I consider that to be a major issue," he says, "and the reason why people don't have a clue about how government works."

In the coming months, participants in the new initiative will explore these and other issues. "The Progressive Challenge is not an end in itself," Sanders says, "but the beginning of a process that will bring progressives in Congress closer to left intellectuals and grass-roots activists, who we want to see play a more active role in shaping the legislative priorities."

Participants do not believe they have all the answers. "Given our weakness as an opposition, we need to examine ourselves and our own premises," says *Rolling Stone* columnist William Greider, who addressed the forum. "We need to have arguments among progressives and put a lot of ideas out on the table before dismissing them."

The goal is to craft concrete policy proposals that address the needs and values of working people, and then to galvanize public support for these proposals when they come before Congress. "We have to rally support for a progressive agenda," Sanders says. "We have to hear what is important to people, we have to introduce that legislation, and then grass-roots America has to support it."

One of the proclaimed aims of the Progressive Challenge

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is to "pinpoint ways to connect that agenda with the central concerns of tens of millions of disillusioned Americans who lack voices in current politics and policy-making."

At the forum, Robert Borosage, co-director of Campaign for America's Future, argued that a progressive agenda would resonate with most Americans. "Working Americans—the three-fourths of the country without a college education—form the basis of the potential Democratic majority," he told the gathering.

Polling by Borosage's organization shows that Americans, even those who define themselves as conservative, are far more progressive on economic issues than the current Washington dialogue. "They are worried that trade agreements cost more jobs than they create," Borosage explains. "Over 60 percent want government to hold corporations accountable, even in the face of the argument that this will make them less competitive and cost jobs. About 70 percent support issuing bonds to rebuild infrastructure. And 65 percent support taxes on the wealthy and corporations to invest in education."

The Democrats failed to retake the House, Borosage argues, not because they were perceived as fiscally irresponsible and too liberal, but because they were outspent by as much as 7-to-1 in many of the most contested races. The White House contributed its part to this defeat, says Borosage, by working "to resuscitate the Republican reputation at the beginning of the campaign, by capitulating on a shameful repeal of welfare, and by bushwacking Democrats in the last week of the campaign with the headlined foreign-money scandals."

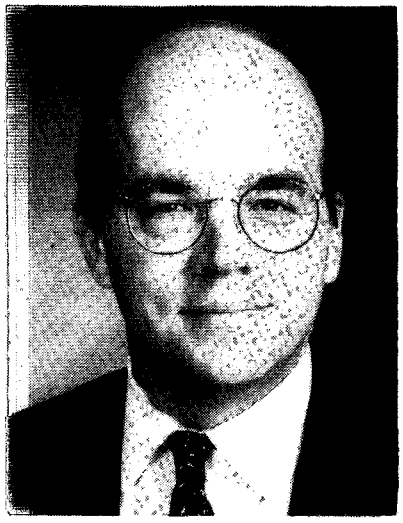
The Progressive Caucus and its public-interest allies can tap into this base of support—if they are able to establish an effective working structure. "This has happened so quickly," says Karen Dolan of the Institute for Policy Studies. "We just started planning this in November, so the nature of the organization will become more defined. The idea is to unify the progressive forces that so far haven't come together and form a solid progressive front."

Bill Goold, Sanders' legislative director, and Karen Dolan, two of the key organizers of the Progressive Challenge, are now busy putting together a series of 12 seminars that will evolve into working groups, each headed by a different Progressive Caucus member. These groups will eventually develop new progressive policy initiatives. The 12 groups will work on trade; the global economy; debt and international financial institutions; campaign finance; challenging welfare reform; Social Security; the budget; transforming corporate welfare; jobs for all; peace and security; ecological taxes; racial justice; education; and saving the cities.

"These working groups will provide settings where progressives around the country can share ideas and proposals directly with members of Congress," says Goold. "The organizing has to take place outside Washington, but people will see clear channels to members of Congress who share the concerns of lower and middle-income Americans."

The working groups will be active through the two years of the 105th Congress. "We need to expand the dialogue," says Dolan, "because it has been set in such narrow terms by

A progressive runs on the issues



In the congressional race in Massachusetts' 3rd District, where 75.6 percent of voters turned out to vote, Jim McGovern proved that progressive candidates can find an audience even in traditionally Republican strongholds. The 37-year-old freshman congressman is a Capitol Hill veteran: He worked his way through American University as an aide to Sen. George McGovern (no relation), and for the past 12 years he served as a senior aide to South Boston's Rep. Joe Moakley.

"We are living in a time that calls for bold proposals," says McGovern. "Educational opportunities, pension portability, protecting the environment, planning to revive our manufacturing base—those are the issues that I ran on, and that resulted in an upset victory." But boldness should be mixed with realism, says McGovern, who calls on progressives to "be out front" in support of investing in the economy and balancing the budget by cutting corporate welfare and trimming the military budget. "Over the years where Democrats have failed," he says, "is that we have proposed tax programs and when they become law, we become very defensive about them."

McGovern ran what he describes as "a grass-roots field campaign." Campaign volunteers registered thousands of new voters, seeking out support in housing projects, welfare offices and low-income neighborhoods. They made hundreds of phone calls every day. Such work led to victory in Republican cities and towns that his opponents had won decisively two and four years ago.

"You have to go back to the basics and go door to door and talk to as many people as you can," says McGovern. "The AFL-CIO did not run an independent campaign in my district, but rank-and-file union members were incredible. We talked in excruciating detail about the issues, about how we wanted to put an economic summit together to revive a manufacturing base. We provided people with the details of what I believed and stood for, and I think people appreciated it." —J.B.

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the Republican Party and the Democratic Leadership Council, which is really who is in power in the Democratic Party."

Goold has been pleased with everything so far, except the media coverage. Neither the public or private TV network nor the newspapers of record saw fit to cover the forum. Even C-Span opted out, choosing instead to rebroadcast—four times—a taped interview with conservative pundit Norman Ornstein. Yet on the following day, C-Span sent out its cameras to provide live coverage of a conference by the right-wing National Taxpayers Union. "This was the most impressive gathering of progressive thinkers and activists in a generation inside the Congress," says Goold. "And the good old corporate-controlled media didn't see that as worthy of coverage."

But is the Progressive Caucus ready for prime time? Barbara Ehrenreich, one of the forum's featured speakers, has some doubts.

"I geared my remarks to taking the Progressive Caucus people by the shoulders, shaking them and saying get out there," says Ehrenreich. "I just don't know how seriously they are taking this." She is particularly disturbed that the leadership of the Congressional Black Caucus, which includes many Progressive Caucus members, scheduled a special all-day meeting on the same day the Progressive Caucus had picked for its forum.

"People are left on economic issues," she says, "but there is no high-profile body that is articulating that into some sort of politics. And in the absence of somebody like the Progressive Caucus saying there is something really wrong here, people lapse into scapegoating and conspiracy theories to explain everything."

Ehrenreich says that her "most important" message to the audience at the Progressive Challenge was to urge the Progressive Caucus to disassociate itself from Clinton. "That was the biggest applause line in my talk," she says. "Nobody said that the whole day. Nobody talked about being saddled with this miscreant. There is no way you can be an economic populist and be associated with Clinton. You have to start by saying he does not represent us."

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing the new initiative is its lack of connection to a real constituency outside the beltway. The American progressive community tends to express and finance its politics through Washington-based, nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations that are prohibited by law from taking part in overt political activity, like encouraging people to lobby for legislation or to vote a congressmember out of office. Public interest groups can educate but they cannot legally organize. Asked if the public interest groups who signed on to the Progressive Challenge would organize their constituents at the grass-roots, Dolan replies, "This is not a lobbying effort. It is an educational effort, designed to educate staffers on the Hill and to provide an opportunity for the nonprofits to enter into a dialogue on these issues and present materials for educative purposes to members of the Progressive Caucus."

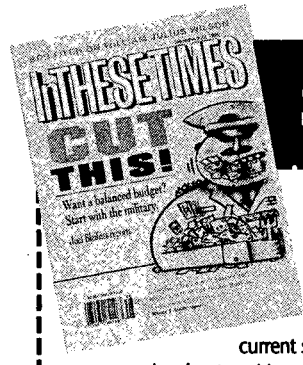
This organizational deficit can be compensated for if the new initiative can build on the existing grass-roots organizations that helped elect current Progressive Caucus members. That, in essence, is the progressive challenge.

"There are tremendous barriers to overcome, but organizing now starts at a much higher plane than it did 40 years ago," says Noam Chomsky, who has not addressed a congressional audience since the '70s. Chomsky was glad to be back before such a receptive audience. "There was a good deal of discussion of corporate power and the corporate control of the media and Congress," he says of the event. "And that hasn't been heard on Capitol Hill for quite some time."

Symposium organizers asked Chomsky to provide the keynote address. He declined the honor, but did speak on the subject of "The Common Good." His speech concluded with a basic truth:

> There is no reason to accept the doctrines crafted to sustain power and privilege, or to believe that we are constrained by mysterious and unknown social laws. These are simply decisions made within institutions that are subject to human will and that must face the test of legitimacy. And if they do not meet the test, they can be replaced by other institutions that are more free and more just, as has happened often in the past. ◀

For more information, contact the Institute for Policy Studies at (202) 234-9382, ext. 228.



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AIDS

Listening to protease

The new AIDS wonder drugs offer more questions than answers.

By Jeffrey L. Reynolds

For Sarah Klymer, as for many people living with AIDS, 1996 seemed to mark a turning point. After five years of battling HIV with an endless array of ineffective and often toxic drugs, the 34-year-old Long Island mother of two says she'll never forget the euphoria she felt as she read about the treatment revolution unfolding at last summer's Ninth International Conference on AIDS. "I had no idea what a protease inhibitor was, but it sure sounded like the cure I never imagined I'd live to see," she said recently, referring to the much-ballyhooed new class of powerful drugs.

Unlike earlier drugs, protease inhibitors limit HIV's ability to reproduce. Less virus in a person's body means less damage to his or her immune system and, generally, better health. Although scientists now speak in confusing terms about using the new drugs to "eradicate" HIV and to reduce the virus to levels that are undetectable using current technologies, complete elimination of HIV remains the unattained holy grail of AIDS research. Still, taken together with fresh insights about how HIV attacks the immune system and better lab tests for predicting the progression of the disease, protease inhibitors seem to hold the long-awaited promise of transforming a fatal illness into a manageable chronic condition—an important step on the way to a cure.

Sara likened the breakthroughs to a death-row pardon. By early August, she was on a drug cocktail that included saquinivir, the first protease inhibitor to gain approval from the Food and Drug Administration, as well as two older antivirals, AZT and 3TC. Though she describes the regimen as grueling and the side effects as "just this side of death," she says the prospect of returning to work, watching her kids get married, and living rather than dying made it all worth it.

But this carefully chosen trade-off began to fall apart in October, when a much-anticipated blood test showed that the drugs were having little effect on the levels of the virus. Her doctor quickly dismissed the disappointing results as an aberration and swapped the saquinivir for indinivir, also known as Crixivan, the most popular protease inhibitor, which is now taken by an estimated 60,000 Americans. By the end of the year, Sara had lost 15 pounds, and her viral levels remained virtually unchanged. "I started to wonder what was wrong with me or what I had done wrong and kept praying that eventually the drugs would kick in," she says. They never did. She's starting 1997 with a new game plan that includes plenty of vitamins, herbs and acupuncture, but no protease inhibitors.

AIDS sufferers' mad dash for the new drugs is understandable, given the endless stream of prominently placed features in the mainstream press that have recounted tales of patients miraculously pulled from their deathbeds by the new arsenal of potent medications. A *Newsweek* cover story in November mused about "the end of AIDS," while noted author, editor and AIDS survivor Andrew Sullivan penned an 8,000-word tome for the *New York Times Magazine* about the "twilight" of the epidemic—not as a prospect for the future, but as a present-day reality.

Given the current atmosphere of celebration and the genuine success some have experienced with the drugs, Sara's story seems like a shocking anomaly, but it's not. For every person who succeeds on the therapies, there seems to be another who has found them to be just as unwieldy, toxic and ineffective as the '80s AIDS wonder drug AZT. The three protease inhibitors now available to the general public were approved and rushed to the market in record time based on a small number of short-term clinical trials involv-

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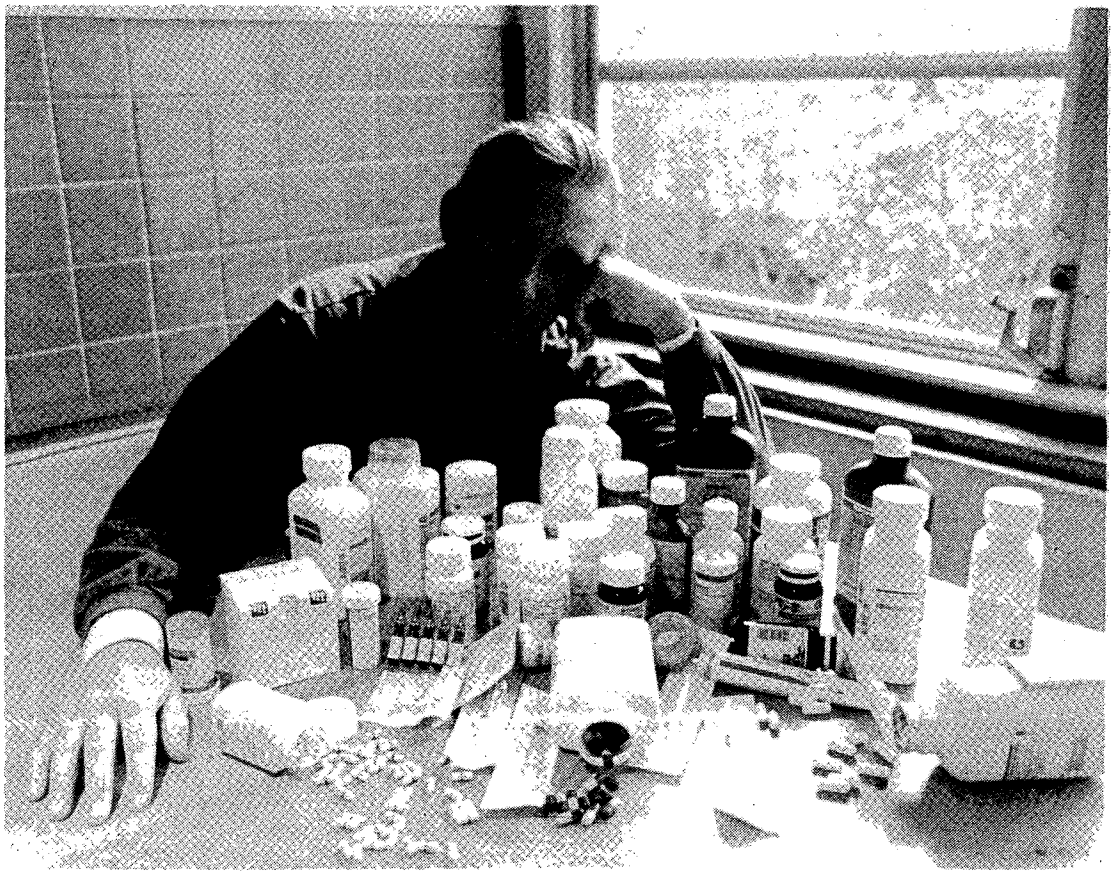
ing just a few drug combinations and enrollees that met specific criteria. Why the rush? Because people are dying. Why the hype? Because after 15 years of never-ending losses and snail-paced progress, protease inhibitors seem to represent a new dawn on the AIDS front, and hope, however precarious, has been renewed.

After 15 years of yelling, screaming and demanding access to better treatments, AIDS activists seem to have got what they were asking for. But treatment, however unproven, is not synonymous with access—especially in a global context. While the new drugs hold promise for some, the great majority of the world's 22 million men, women and children with AIDS will die before ever hearing the words protease inhibitor, much less being able to afford the $15,000 to $20,000 annual price tag.

These economic and social disparities make even the most promising medical developments meaningless not only in Third World countries, but also in the growing number of Third World-like communities in the United States. Only those with the right body chemistry, a stroke of luck and the economic, social and emotional resources necessary to follow the complicated regimen will get a shot at renewed health, stamina and a new lease on life.

"I'd dare anyone to maintain the schedule and regimen," says Brendan Pierce, a physician's assistant at the SUNY Health Sciences Center in Brooklyn. Life on protease inhibitors means taking up to 30 pills a day at the correct times, in the correct order and with the correct foods. Some must be taken on an empty stomach, others without fatty foods—a difficult task for those who depend on handouts and soup kitchens for their meals. Aside from the need for consistency, there are few gold standards in terms of when to start therapy and which combinations to use. A recent survey of AIDS doctors conducted by Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York found that almost no two doctors were using the drugs alike or counseling patients in the same way.

Because even a small number of missed or inconsistent dosages can give HIV the window of opportunity it needs to build resistance and render the drugs useless, Pierce says he won't prescribe protease inhibitors to those he deems likely to stumble on the regimen—about 70 percent of his patients. "If I have a drug user who I know is not being compliant, I won't prescribe a protease inhibitor at that point; instead I'll aggressively treat opportunistic infections and prescribe nutritional supplements," he explains. "Coupling drug use with a protease-inhibitor regimen is a disaster, especially coupled with the current environment of criminalization and the lack of reasonable support for the active user."



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Greg Fauth contemplates his AIDS medication.

For many people infected with HIV, compliance is further diminished by a host of side effects—reportedly more severe in women—that make life on the drugs unbearable. "Some prescribing is being done by practitioners who fail to counsel patients about the risks of nonadherence or what they can reasonably expect from the medications," says Dr. Jeanne Carey, a physician at Beth Israel Hospital's HIV Comprehensive Care Center in Manhattan. Contrary to the drug manufacturers' claims of high tolerance, Carey estimates that 70 percent of those on protease inhibitors suffer nausea and diarrhea every day. "It's a complicated thing," she explains, "to talk to a person about how much they're willing to change their lives in order to take these medica-

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tions, and to tell them that if you take the medications as prescribed, the numbers on your lab sheets will look better, but that's not quality of life."

Chris Jackson couldn't agree more. Diagnosed with HIV 10 years ago and relatively symptom-free and healthy since that time, the Long Island 38-year-old decided to try Crixivan for six months. She describes her adherence to the arduous regimen as "meticulous," and within three months her HIV levels dropped from a fairly high 200,000 viruses per milliliter of plasma to undetectable levels. A stunning success, in other words? Not according to Chris, who is also diabetic. "My blood sugars were uncontrollable, my kidneys hurt, I couldn't sleep, and when I walked up a flight of stairs, I had to sit down for 15 minutes," she says. "The rest of your body is falling apart, but you're not dying of AIDS." Chris says her doctor pressured her to stay on Crixivan, but she refused, went off the drug a month ago and has never felt better.

The lionized medical advances in the fight against AIDS can also work at cross-purposes with public-health policies designed to slow the spread of the virus. Prevention efforts to date have failed to adequately reach many people of color, drug users, teens and women, all groups among whom infection rates continue to climb. Now the growing notion that AIDS is no longer fatal reduces the perceived danger of a disease that already seems like a comfortably distant threat to most people. Unsafe injection practices are once again becoming common. And buoyed by speculation that lower viral levels in a person's body may reduce the possibility of infecting others, many gay men—especially younger men—are returning to unsafe sex.

The last decade's tenuous progress in AIDS prevention may be further set back by the spread of protease-inhibitor-resistant strains of HIV. Within a month of starting a combination of AZT, 3TC and saquinivir last May, Greg Fauth knew something wasn't right. "I felt like someone beat the hell out of me, like I was going to die, and so much worse than ever before," laments the 41-year-old recovering drug addict who, against his doctor's advice, now takes the drugs sporadically. Fauth gives the leftover medication away to his friends without health insurance, Medicaid or other means of financing the expensive drugs, many of whom also only take the drugs sporadically.

Recent studies suggest that between 10 percent to 20 percent of those newly diagnosed as HIV-positive have been infected with a strain of the virus that is resistant to AZT from the start. So the emergence of a much stronger variety of HIV within the next few years is a significant threat. Irregular use of protease inhibitors encourages the development of protease-resistant strains. It's precisely this potential that has prompted officials like San Francisco Public Health Director Sandra Hernandez to wonder aloud about Directly Observed Therapy, in which doctors monitor AIDS patients to be sure they are taking the medication on schedule. Drawing a parallel to efforts to control multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis, Hernandez last fall suggested making protease-inhibitor therapy mandatory and having the health department supervise a schedule of dosages for the noncompliant. There is, however, a world of difference between the two diseases. Not only is tuberculosis transmitted far more easily than HIV, but TB medications completely cure the disease within a few months, are only taken once a day, and don't have serious side effects. Hernandez quickly retracted her comments in the face of a fiery response from AIDS activists.

AIDS funding battles have always been the epidemic's most contentious. The alluring potential of protease inhibitors has reignited nasty disagreements about how federal Ryan White CARE Act dollars should be divided. A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* quoted AIDS Memorial Quilt founder Cleve Jones and other prominent activists as saying that drugs, treatment and research should replace social and community-based services as the AIDS funding priority. Michael T. Isbell, associate executive director of Gay Men's Health Crisis, agrees that "access to the new drugs should be the number-one priority," but also believes that consumers are going to require services that make access to care meaningful. "We are seeing people with multiple psychosocial issues," says Isbell, "and if you don't have a roof over your head, or food to eat, you don't stand a good chance of maintaining the therapies."

If nothing else, protease inhibitors are further proof of the undeniable link between our individual and collective immune systems. Doing battle with HIV means confronting not only a relentless virus, but the persistent social epidemics of poverty, homelessness and substance abuse that plague the disadvantaged populations that make up the majority of new cases.

Whether we've truly turned a corner in the AIDS crisis remains to be seen. That will be determined largely by our ability to improve the tolerability and efficacy of protease inhibitors, to enhance access to those without, and to stick with public education efforts. Most importantly, protease inhibitors remind us that the fight against AIDS won't be won in the laboratory, but in our communities, where we must strengthen our response to a virus that thrives on complacency. ◀

Jeffrey L. Reynolds is director of public policy and public relations for the Long Island Association for AIDS Care, Inc.

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—Ken Saro-Wiwa
Jan. 4, 1993, Ogoni Day

The Nigerian military prepares for another campaign on behalf of its patron, Shell Oil.

By Steve Kretzmann

It's not a holiday that will appear in your new datebook, but January 4 is a very special day for the Ogoni people of Nigeria. On that day in 1993, 300,000 people—three-fifths of the total population of Ogoni—converged on the town of Bori to demand their environmental rights and protest against Royal/Dutch Shell. It was the largest demonstration ever against an oil company and, given the travel restrictions and constant military surveillance the Ogoni face, a remarkable feat of nonviolent organizing. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) had arrived.

"We have woken up to find our lands devastated by agents of death called oil companies," said then MOSOP leader Garrick Leton to the crowd on that original Ogoni Day. "Our atmosphere has been totally polluted, our lands degraded, our waters contaminated, our trees poisoned, so much so that our flora and fauna have virtually disappeared. We are asking for the restoration of our environment. We are asking for the basic necessities of life—water, electricity, roads, education. We are asking, above all, for the right to self-determination so that we can be responsible for our resources and our environment."

Since forcing Shell to withdraw most of its operations from their 404-square-mile homeland four years ago, the Ogoni have moved to the front line in Nigeria's struggle for democracy and in the global movement for corporate accountability. That first Ogoni Day, says Ledum Mitee, acting president of MOSOP, "marked the beginning of our worsening season of suffering."

An independent report by the World Council of Churches estimates that since 1993, at least 2,000 Ogoni have died, 30,000 have been internally displaced, and another 1,000 have fled Nigeria and live in miserable conditions in camps in neighboring countries. Ogoni author and MOSOP activist Ken Saro-Wiwa was hanged last year after being framed for murder. Today Saro-Wiwa's colleagues are scattered throughout Europe and North America.

Accounting for about 40 percent of Nigeria's economy and 45 percent of its foreign exchange, Shell's activities underpin General Sani Abacha's reign of terror. MOSOP has maintained for years that in addition to the environmental damage the company has caused, Shell has financed military operations in Ogoni, armed soldiers, bribed witnesses at Saro-Wiwa's trial and provided logistical support to military operations. Until recently, Shell always hotly denied these accusations, maintaining that its role in Nigeria was purely commercial. But now the company is furiously back-pedaling as new, incriminating information comes to light (see sidebar).

In the year since Saro-Wiwa's execution made global headlines, Shell and Nigeria have moved in for the kill. While both entities have spent millions retaining public relations firms, conditions have got worse in Ogoni. According to MOSOP, over the last year, Nigeria's military government judicially executed 36 people, detained 286 others and conducted fatal raids on 19 communities. Today Ogoni is an occupied land. The Rivers State Internal Security Task Force (ISTF), a special military unit that was created in 1994 in response to MOSOP, is more active than ever. Ogoni families awoke on New Year's Day 1997 to find 1,000 more troops stationed in their communities with orders to prevent any observance of Ogoni Day. Dusk-to-dawn curfews have been in place since late October 1996.

As the military tries to beat the Ogoni into submission, MOSOP fears that a full resumption of Shell's operations cannot be far behind. Shell maintains that it will not return to Ogoni unless invited, and that it will not work behind a

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"security shield." However, it appears that Shell already has plans underway to return to Ogoni. On October 17, the Nigerian daily, the *Guardian*, disclosed Shell's "Ogoni re-entry plan," estimated to cost $39 million. The Nigerian government's military administrator, Col. Musa Shehu, apparently approved the plan after a meeting with Shell Nigeria's Managing Director Brian Anderson. The first stage of the plan would reportedly focus on limited amounts of cleanup and community assistance. In later stages, however, the company would get down to business: The plan sets an ambitious goal of bringing production back up to 20,000 barrels per day within four years.

MOSOP is adamant that no negotiations or discussions take place prior to the withdrawal of troops from Ogoni. "We cannot negotiate with guns pointed at us," says Mitee. Activists report that in mid-October, ISTF soldiers approached two prominent Ogoni chiefs with a memo that the soldiers said urged Shell to resume its business in Ogoni. Upon being presented with this document and asked for his imprint, the first chief, who cannot read, requested that a literate colleague be present. The ISTF soldiers refused, demanding his immediate support and threatening him with reprisals if he refused. The second chief asked to get his reading glasses, was refused, and was also forced to sign the memo. Shell officials claim that they have no knowledge of these events, and that they have no plans to re-enter Ogoni.

Similar strong-arm tactics are being used on those who are simply seeking compensation for environmental damage. In mid-1994, the Yorla flowstation, a Shell facility, blew up, spilling thousands of gallons of oil onto Ogoni farmland. A group of Ogoni filed suit against Shell for damages. In late February 1996, Shell called the Ogoni plaintiffs, without the knowledge of their lawyers, to a meeting where they were "offered" a settlement. This offer, according to a letter of protest subsequently sent to Shell by Lucius E. Nwosu, one of the Ogoni's lawyers, was made "under an environment of full combatant military personnel." Nwosu and Partners immediately resigned from the case, noting that they were not used to negotiating "in terrorism" and that they feared "an engineered conflict may be visited on our clientele."

U.S. courts may offer a better shot at redress. On November 8, 1996, the families of Ken Saro-Wiwa and John Kpuinen filed suit in New York District Court against Shell for its role in the detention, trial and subsequent hanging of the two activists. The complaint, which was filed by attorneys from the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), says that Shell bribed witnesses at Saro-Wiwa and Kpuinen's trial. The plaintiffs point to links between Shell and the military regime that show the influence the oil giant had on Nigerian policy. Shell faces charges that include wrongful death and crimes against humanity. "Companies that profit from crimes against humanity shouldn't get to do business as usual in the United States," says CCR staff attorney Jennie Green.

Shell recognizes that it has a problem, but it has consistently tried to correct its image rather than its behavior. In response to the execution of Saro-Wiwa, Shell formed a "Nigeria Unit," headed by Nnaemeka Achebe, who has spent the last seven months following MOSOP activists and supporters, giving Shell's side of the story at forums around the world. Achebe, a former general manager of Shell Nigeria, once defended the company by explaining, "For a commercial company trying to make investments, you need a stable environment; dictatorships can give you that."

While the Ogoni left in Nigeria continue to fight for their rights, MOSOP activists in exile are broadening their campaign against Shell. In late November, MOSOP representative Komene Famaa journeyed to the Camisea region of the Peruvian Amazon where Shell plans to invest $2.7 billion over 40 years in a gas project. The first wells are set to be drilled over the next few months.

The Camisea project is of particular concern because much of Shell's activity is planned for inside the Reserve for Nomadic Kugapakori and Nahua Peoples—two of the last peoples left on the planet who have had almost no contact with the Western world. Famaa met with members of the neighboring Machiguenga community. He told them about "the nonviolent way of resistance" and decried Shell's double standards. "What they are doing in South America,

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Africa and Asia, they dare not try in North America or Europe," says Famaa.

To date, oil profits have proved more powerful than people or principles. But the Ogoni have not despaired. "Your courage," Mitee said in his 1997 Ogoni Day address, "has demystified the oppressor. Your agonies attracted world attention and deprived the oppressor of a slumbering conscience. Your discipline in the face of provocations has inspired hope and rewarded faith in nonviolence as a weapon for fighting oppression. There is no doubt about our ultimate victory." ◀

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Shelling out for murder

In early November 1995, with Ken Saro-Wiwa's life on the line, British documentary filmmakers Glen Ellis and Kay Bishop rushed to produce an updated version of their documentary *Delta Force*. To the already hard-hitting film, which contains shocking footage of environmental destruction and the aftermath of military raids on Ogoni communities, they added segments featuring Saro-Wiwa and his son denouncing the "evil alliance" between Shell and Nigeria.

For years, MOSOP and Saro-Wiwa alleged that Shell had been funding the Nigerian military and providing them with arms, helicopters and boats. On dozens of occasions, Shell had answered these allegations with flat denials such as, "We categorically refute that any form of input was ever provided to the military."

Ellis and Bishop were unconvinced by Shell's protestations of innocence, and backed up their claims in the film by pointing to an incriminating memo dated May 12, 1994, just 10 days before Saro-Wiwa's arrest. In that memo, Paul Okuntimo, the head of the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, states, "Shell operations are still impossible unless ruthless military operations are undertaken." Okuntimo recommends "wasting targets cutting across communities and leadership cadres, especially vocal individuals," and finally calls for "pressure on oil companies for prompt regular inputs as discussed." Okuntimo makes a memorable appearance in *Delta Force*, boasting that he knows over 200 ways to kill, and that he wishes the Ogoni would come out of hiding so that he could practice his technique. Within a month of the film's initial airing in May 1995, Okuntimo had lost his job.

Shell reacted to *Delta Force* with numerous public statements further denying any involvement with the Nigerian military, and by lodging a complaint with the British Broadcasting Complaints Commission (BCC). The complaint alleged that *Delta Force* had inaccurately represented Shell's activities in Nigeria in areas ranging from environmental destruction to collusion with the military. If the BCC had upheld the complaint, it would have greatly legitimized Shell's protestations of innocence and set the stage for further legal action.

Ellis and Bishop stood by all their claims and quickly engaged Shell lawyers in correspondence over the substantive points in question. One major point of contention was the film's assertion that Shell had paid the military. Shell's lawyers, perhaps unsure of what cards Ellis and Bishop were holding, opted to admit limited guilt. On June 10, 1996, they confessed that Shell had paid "field allowances" to the Nigerian military. In early November, Eric Nickson, head of media relations for Shell International, admitted to a British reporter: "We have paid the military, but only on two occasions, one of which was to go and look for a fire engine. We did pay Lt. Col. Okuntimo field allowances on that occasion but it was only enough for about two meals a day." Shell further admitted in the BCC process that they had provided logistical support to the military in the form of access to Shell helicopters and boats.

The two incidents that Shell refers to both resulted in Ogoni fatalities. In the first, Shell acknowledges that it called on "the usual assistance"—troops—from Rivers State authorities in late April 1993, when a conflict erupted between a Shell subcontractor and the Ogoni. The incident began when Willbros, an American subcontractor to Shell, started bulldozing crops to lay the Trans-Niger pipeline. Two days later, 10,000 Ogonis came out for a peaceful demonstration calling on the company to halt the construction. The military fired on the crowd, wounding 10. Demonstrations continued, and on May 3 a soldier killed a demonstrator. Shell now admits that "field allowances and transportation" of an army unit that accompanied Willbros "were provided by the contractor." Shell maintains that those soldiers were not involved in any violence.

Shell further acknowledges that six months after that incident, it asked the 24 soldiers of the Second Amphibious Brigade, under the command of Okuntimo, to accompany Shell staff to the town of Korokoro, where, the company maintains, the community had stolen a fire engine. Shell insists that its staff and Okuntimo's soldiers came merely to conduct a "dialogue" requesting its return. Soldiers killed one Ogoni man in the resulting "talks."

Significantly, both the incidents to which Shell now admits took place after the oil company supposedly withdrew all its operations from Ogoni following the first Ogoni Day in 1993. Shell, of course, could have foretold that Ogonis would die if it turned to the military for assistance. In 1990, Shell's request for the Mobile Police Force (known locally as the "Kill and Go") at Umuechem resulted in 80 people dead and 495 houses destroyed. At the time, Shell apologized for the incident, saying it would never happen again.

On December 18, 1996, Shell withdrew its complaint with the BCC, citing the "complexity of the matter." —S.K.

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WELFARE

Divide and conquer

Why have labor and AFDC recipients not been closer allies in the welfare debate?

By Katherine Sciacchitano

In October 1995, the French labor movement—which claims a mere 10 percent of workers—led a public employee strike that idled transportation for weeks. The threat: an increase in the retirement age of public workers. The result: a hasty retreat by the government.

Ten months later, in Washington, D.C., a Democratic president signed legislation repealing the 60-year-old Aid to Families With Dependent Children, an action predicted to catapult 1 million children into poverty. There was no public outcry. No mass demonstrations or threats to withhold support from Clinton's re-election campaign. At the Democratic National Convention, where criticism of the so-called Personal Responsibility Act (PRA) was limited to passing remarks, labor confined its protests to a special area reserved for off-camera demonstrations, and then poured $35 million into campaigns to re-elect Democrats, almost all of whom had voted for the measure.

Even if we assume the mainstream media under-reported opposition to the legislation, we still have to ask why so momentous a change roused such a tepid response? And will the pattern be repeated after the abolition of Medicare and Social Security "as we know them"?

The goal of welfare reform is not to cut off benefits to a small group of welfare recipients, but to reshape the whole market for unskilled labor. Any hopes that the law can be patched or "fixed" are illusory. The reform's basic mechanism is simple: Create a captive labor force that must work or lose benefits. Eliminate minimum-wage requirements, federal floors on welfare grants, and protections against displacement of existing workers. And leave implementation up to the states.

The new law's effect on the labor market is straightforward. Like similar measures from the 19th century, the law will channel welfare recipients into low-wage jobs, where they will drive down wages even further. "The PRA is about increasing profits by lowering wages, privatizing public work and weakening unions," says Andy Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union. "It is about clearing the way for a race to the bottom." John Milkint, a temp agency executive in Milwaukee, put it even more bluntly: "People won't work [for minimum wage] because their benefits are too high. Benefits are too high because they are pegged to union wages that prevent us from competing internationally. They both must fall."

The welfare bill's conservative economic agenda throws into relief one of the most urgent challenges facing the left: constructing its own economic agenda and building the political base to put it into practice. Having destroyed 60 years of welfare policy, the new law nonetheless presents an opportunity to overcome the divisions among labor, minorities and women embedded in the old policy—divisions that helped make welfare a tool for alleviating poverty of the few, rather than a weapon for strengthening the economic well-being of all working people.

One reason the law has not provoked a stronger backlash is that not all workers will be harmed in the same way. Welfare recipients will be channeled into low-wage service occupations, such as home care, office cleaning and retail, rather than higher-wage manufacturing jobs. It is the politically marginalized workers in the service occupations whose wages and working conditions will be most affected. Yet many have been convinced that welfare and the taxes that pay for it—rather than their own low wages and lack of adequate benefits—constitute their biggest economic burden. They have also fallen prey to an "us vs. them" mentali-

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ty that pits them against welfare recipients. The stereotype of someone on welfare remains a black woman raised on the dole, having child after child to avoid working. It doesn't seem to matter that, in reality, the typical AFDC mother is as likely to be white as black, is working at a job that pays too little to lift her out of poverty or qualify her for unemployment compensation, has two children (the same number as most women), and has been on welfare for less than two years.

Unlike most Western European countries, where welfare benefits are universal and often politically popular, the United States has a two-tiered system based on employment status. Welfare is for people who "won't work." By contrast, benefits like unemployment insurance, workers compensation and Social Security are "earned."

Dating from the New Deal, this system has helped maintain divisions between women, African-Americans and the labor movement, and has fostered liberal economic and social policies as impoverished as welfare recipients. New Deal programs such as old-age and unemployment insurance assumed breadwinners were men, and aimed at reducing poverty by ensuring the stability and adequacy of a "family wage." With benefits pegged to earnings, these programs favored white male wage-earners and were never considered welfare. By contrast, as Linda Gordon explains in *Pitied But Not Entitled,* Aid to Dependent Children, the precursor of AFDC, was intended not to lower poverty rates, but to enable widows, and to a lesser extent divorced mothers, to stay home with children. This is one reason that welfare has never reduced poverty among children to the extent Social Security has among the elderly.



President Franklin D. Roosevelt signing the Social Security Act in 1935.

Besides gender divisions, welfare also reflected racial and regional differences. The Roosevelt administration struck a deal with Southern elites to jettison federal requirements for benefits compatible with "decency and health," and to make agricultural and domestic workers, many of whom were black, ineligible for unemployment insurance and Social Security. This Faustian bargain cemented the Democrats' dependence on conservative Southern interests, maintained the South as a low-wage region, and reinforced distinctions between white male workers who deserved income support, and others, mainly women and African-Americans, who were less deserving.

These contours of U.S. welfare policy were buttressed by what labor historian David Brody calls the "job consciousness" of the U.S. unions. By the '30s, most European labor movements had founded labor parties and were on their way to establishing universal income supports. By contrast, the American Federation of Labor eschewed political partisanship and opposed even unemployment compensation until 1932. The labor federation preferred to rely on collective bargaining for worker protections—a policy which itself had racial overtones, since most AFL unions excluded blacks.

During World War II, the labor movement tried unsuccessfully to increase its role in the economy. With bargaining power bolstered by wartime labor shortages and militancy during the Depression, Walter Reuther, head of the United Auto Workers, proposed a bold plan for industrial councils in which labor would participate equally with management. Aimed at increasing wartime production, the councils, had they survived after the war, would have been one step toward establishing democratic economic planning as a means to post-war full employment.

Vehemently opposed by business, the plan was soon rejected despite substantial public enthusiasm. (Reuther was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine.) Similar proposals for economic conversion to peacetime production fared no better. By the time Congress enacted full-employment legislation in 1946, the measure was more symbolic than substantive. Two years later, in exchange for a hefty wage increase, the UAW backed down from its strike demand that General Motors raise wages without raising prices. It was a strategic decision to trade labor's broad social role for a part of the unexpected post-war economic boom. That same year, fearing a growing conservative backlash against labor militancy, the AFL and CIO redoubled support for Democrats at a time when rank-and-file support for a third party was at its peak.

Labor's post-war economic pact proved to be a double-edged sword. Unions continued to play a key role in the passage of all major social legislation, from AFDC to the Civil Rights Act, Medicare and Medicaid. But collective bargaining over health insurance and pensions—introduced during World War II as a way around wage freezes—created a kind of private welfare state that put increasing distance between union members and unorganized workers.

By the late '70s, welfare policy and the labor movement were on a collision course. A massive corporate assault on unions drove down wages. At the same time, welfare-rights organizing, in the wake of the civil rights movement, had

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expanded benefits. The result was backlash as images of black "welfare queens" provided a convenient scapegoat at a time of growing economic insecurity. In fact, AFDC had served as a kind of minimum wage, putting a floor on labor market competition. Over the past 20 years, worker protections such as employment insurance and the minimum wage have declined—in real dollars—in tandem with welfare benefits.

This history has left the labor movement isolated in many of its battles. It has deprived the left of the political base needed to pursue the kinds of universal programs for labor-market development and family support that have resulted in lower poverty rates and higher wage levels in much of Western Europe. And it has eviscerated meaningful discussion of full-employment policies, focusing debate on benefit levels and taxes instead. As Linda Gordon put it, in the United States, "the people who think about the Federal Reserve Board are completely different from the people who think about welfare policy."

Now that the right has brought the relationship between welfare and economic policy back into sharp focus, the question is whether labor and its allies will be able to overcome that history and build a broad economic counter-agenda and the alliances necessary to carry it out.

"For labor," says Andy Stern at the SEIU, "it is critical to see welfare recipients as our allies and fellow workers. If we don't, it will be a two-tiered work force." Founded in 1987 in response to the work requirements for welfare recipients of the Family Support Act, the National Welfare Rights Union knows who its allies must be. "In the '60s, job markets were still expanding, and more women were entering the labor force. The struggle was over human rights," says Marion Kramer, NWRU's executive director. "Now we are facing an economy where more and more workers are permanently unemployed. Our platform includes a guaranteed annual income to provide security while society is making the adjustment to lower levels of employment. And all work must be compensated at living wage, not just minimum wage."

While organized labor has not endorsed a guaranteed income, several unions, including AFSCME and the SEIU, are supporting local living-wage campaigns. AFSCME has spearheaded a National Fair Work Campaign that seeks commitments from employers of workfare participants to abide by minimum standards, such as paying the minimum wage and providing job training and opportunities for permanent employment. Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO has begun a long-term effort to educate trade unionists about economic issues, and a number of international unions have launched membership education initiatives around welfare reform.

Massachusetts is one of several states where trade unionists and welfare activists are beginning to forge direct links. The 1992 Campaign for Real Welfare Reform tried to push the state government to provide social and economic supports for single working women, from job training and child care to programs for domestic violence and substance abuse. The effort "failed miserably," according to Professor Ann Withorn of the University of Massachusetts-Boston, in part because the terms of national debate had shifted so far to the right. Nevertheless, the campaign moved the welfare debate beyond a purely defensive battle and helped build a statewide network of activists now organizing in Massachusetts around jobs and workers' rights.

While many state coalitions are paring their agendas to "achievable" legislative goals, Massachusetts activists are more conscious than ever of the need to change the broader terms of debate. Their agenda has widened to what Randy Albelda, an economist at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, calls "the supports that would be needed to maintain a family if every adult had to have a job." Elly Leary, a member of UAW Local 2324, emphasizes that unions also need to "educate union members, who are working two and three jobs and are furious, that the economy doesn't create enough jobs for everyone, and not all people can or should be working. In the long term, this will mean reducing the workweek and making sure that all jobs are linked to a living wage."

The network is collaborating with the Massachusetts Jobs Project (MJP), a group that organizes contingent workers, in the realization that many people kicked off the welfare rolls will join the growing army of part-time and temporary labor. MJP recently submitted legislation that would require the state government to analyze and publicize the numbers and quality of jobs in the Massachusetts economy. According to Tim Costello, director of the project, this kind of "job gap" study is essential for informed public debate, not only about contingent workers but about whether there are adequate jobs for welfare recipients. The bill would also outlaw discrimination against part-time and contingent workers by requiring they be paid the same wages and benefits as full-time workers.

The MJP and the Massachusetts welfare network hope to build broad-based alliances among immigrant workers, contingent workers and welfare recipients. To be effective, says Costello, such organizing ultimately requires a bridge organization that will allow groups to maintain their identities while advancing a common agenda.

Normally, political parties fulfill this function. "Certainly neither the Democrats nor the Republicans represent our interests," says Ethel Long Scott, director of the Women's Economic Agenda Project in Oakland. "We desperately need a party where we can build our own movement." The Labor Party, which held its founding convention in Cleveland last June, broke important ground when it adopted a guaranteed annual income as part of its first platform. Whether or not the new party can accommodate such a movement, it's clearer than ever that building a left vision for the economy will require moving outside the current two-party system. ◀

Katherine Sciacchitano is a former labor lawyer and organizer who now teaches at the University of Wisconsin School for Workers. She writes regularly on welfare issues for *In These Times*.

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ENVIRONMENT

Blowing smoke

Industry lobbyists win again with the EPA's new air-pollution standards.

By Jeffrey St. Clair

When Bill Clinton journeyed to the north rim of the Grand Canyon this fall to preside over the creation of a new national monument, he quipped to reporters that it was kind of odd that there was so much fog in Arizona at that time of year. That wasn't fog, Mr. President, it was smog, clogging the air in one of the most remote and least populated areas in North America. The pollution shrouding the Grand Canyon had wafted from the smokestacks of coal-fired power plants and refineries hundreds of miles away.

The Grand Canyon is only one of dozens of national parks where toxic compounds in the air are stunting tree growth and killing alpine flora. The situation in America's cities is even worse. More than 400 counties now exceed federal air-pollution levels. No fewer than 185 different scientific studies support the conclusion that the nation's air is becoming ever more toxic.

Nearly 130 million Americans are exposed every day to harmful levels of air pollution. Studies at the Harvard Medical School estimate that 60,000 Americans die prematurely every year from respiratory illnesses and heart attacks linked to air pollution. Moreover, 250,000 children a year fall victim to aggravated asthma and other respiratory disorders caused by breathing toxic air—an increase of 11 percent since 1980. Respiratory problems are now the leading cause of children's hospital admissions, according to the National Institutes of Health.

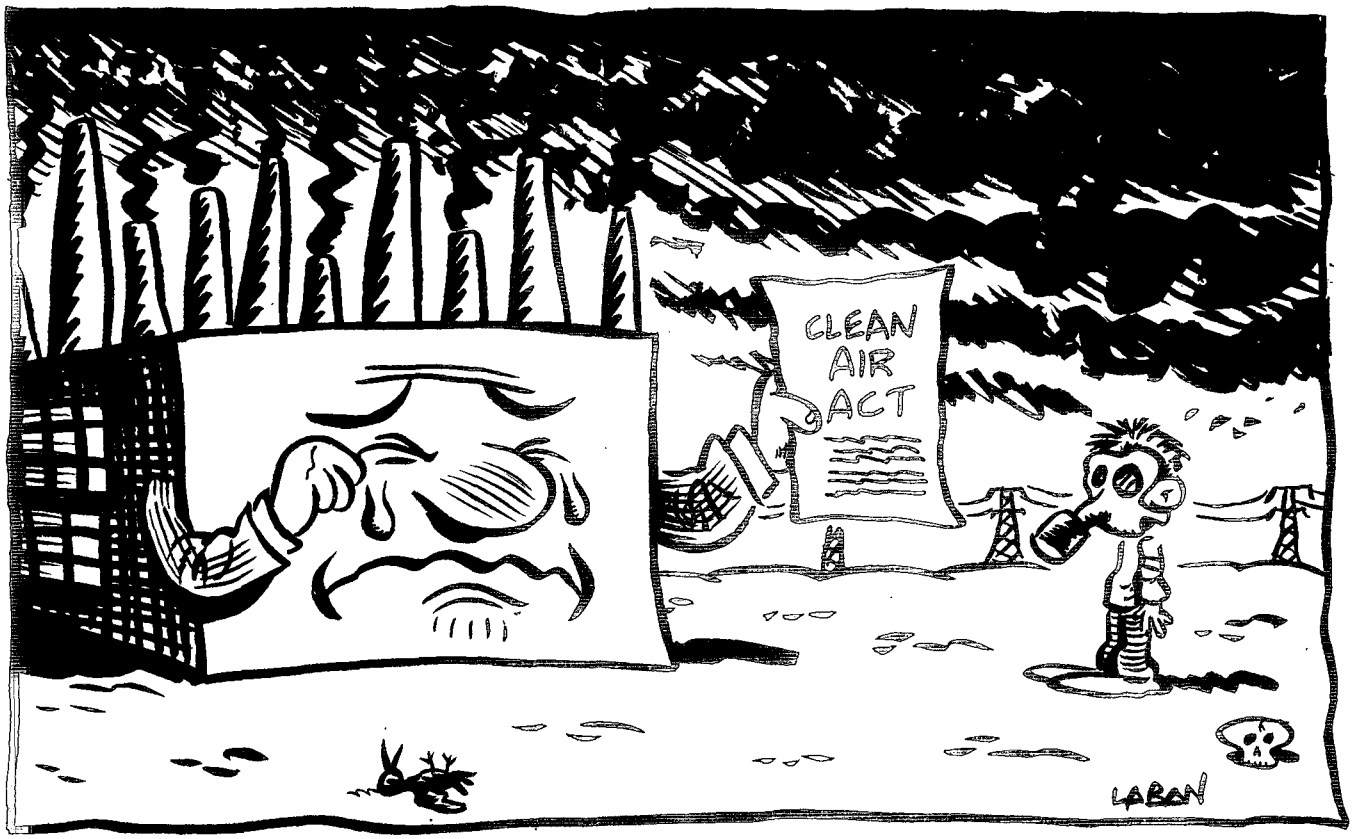
Yet, the deterioration of the nation's air has aroused little attention from the major media outlets. Over the past 10 years, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have printed more than 250 stories on the admittedly serious problems of global warming and acid rain, but have run fewer than two dozen articles on the adverse health impacts of dirty air.

So it was no surprise that the EPA's recent announcement of the first new air-pollution standards in more than a decade received only cursory coverage. Of course, this may have been what the Clinton administration was hoping for when it chose to quietly issue its long-awaited new report on air quality on a dead news day: the Friday after Thanksgiving, November 29, when most Americans were out shopping their way into the next holiday.

In case you missed it, the EPA recommended a modest tightening of standards on urban smog and fine-particle air pollution, recommendations that EPA Director Carol Browner said were the result "of the most exhaustive scientific review in EPA history." The proposed standards are far from the tight controls hoped for by most clean-air advocates. Nonetheless, early estimates suggest that the new regulations, if adopted, will result in 300 new areas being designated as having chronically unhealthy air, including St. Louis, Louisville, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Des Moines, Indianapolis and New York City. Under the new guidelines, these cities would be required to develop EPA-approved air-quality management plans to reduce emissions or risk losing federal funding for highways and other projects. The regulations, which were released in draft form, are currently undergoing a 90-day public comment period. The final standards will be released sometime in the summer of 1997.

Smog, of course, is the sepia-colored haze that shrouds Los Angeles and dozens of other cities for much of the summer. It forms in the lower atmosphere where gases such as nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds react in warm temperatures. The ingredients for smog are spewed into the air from car exhausts and the smokestacks of oil refineries, power plants and incinerators.

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Particulate pollution comes in two varieties: fine and coarse. Coarse particles, more than 2.5 microns in diameter, are typically generated by crushing operations, vehicle travel on unpaved roads and windblown dust. Fine particles are defined as being less than 2.5 microns across, a fraction of the width of a human hair. In contrast to coarse particles, these microscopic particles typically derive from sulfur and nitrogen produced by refineries, smelters, power plants, slash burning and incinerators. On an especially smoggy day, the fine and coarse particles mix together in a kind of airborne chemical cocktail—a single breath can take in millions of these ultra-fine particles. They penetrate deep into the lungs, lodge firmly in vital tissues and stay there, accumulating, for years.

Though the Clean Air Act of 1970 requires the EPA to re-evaluate its air standards every five years, the agency's last assessment of air pollutants was in 1987. During the Bush era, Dan Quayle's off-the-shelf anti-regulation operation, the White House Council on Competitiveness, quashed new reviews of smog and soot regulations—over the rather meek protestations of then EPA head William K. Reilly—at the request of the American Petroleum Institute.

Clinton's EPA, the leadership of which was hand-picked by that green guru, Al Gore, has hardly been in a rush to correct the damage. In fact, the administration only reassessed the old standards and developed new regulations when it was forced to by a federal court order stemming from a 1992 lawsuit filed by the American Lung Association. The Clinton administration then moved glacially to develop the new regulations, waiting until the last possible moment to release its draft proposal.

This was not always the plan. Some administration officials had wanted to establish new air standards on smog and toxic soot as early as the fall of 1993. Former White House aide Harold Ickes, for example, pointed out that in contrast to earlier air-pollution battles over acid rain and global warming, attacking smog and particulates would, with the right spin, be a publicly popular move because of the tremendous health benefits. Other officials suggested that new air standards could be linked to health care reform.

But this strategy was quickly crushed by a powerful coalition of cabinet members led by the late Ron Brown and former Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen, the oil man from Texas. Bentsen and Brown maintained that such a move would alienate some of the administration's biggest supporters in the business community, including Arco and Southern California Edison. Since Clinton's election in 1992, Arco has sluiced more than $100,000 a year in soft money to the Democratic Party. Its refineries in California would be a major target of the new air regulations.

The smokestack industries had good reason to be nervous about the possibility of new clean-air standards. For nearly 20 years, the EPA has focused on coarse particles, such as road dust, fly ash, cement kiln dust and other construction-related pollution. A shift in emphasis to fine particles would affect emissions from power plants, incinerators and other major industries that have until now largely escaped scrutiny.

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What press coverage there was in November tended to focus on the economic costs of the proposed new restrictions on smog, which the *Chicago Tribune*, quoting an American Petroleum Institute study, said might cost the city of Chicago as much as $7 billion. Other newspapers, such as the *Portland Oregonian* and the *Indianapolis Star*, decried the oppressive nature of the new regulations and their chilling effect on local industries, such as pulp mills, coal-fired power plants and cement kilns. The *Los Angeles Times*, long an implacable critic of federal clean-air laws, quoted city air-management officials as saying the new standards were "simply unattainable."

This news slant was a PR triumph for the energy, incineration and automobile industries, because the real story on the new air regulations is that they aren't nearly as restrictive as most in the environmental and scientific communities had hoped. Indeed, the regulations announced by Browner only went half as far in restricting smog and fine-particle pollution as the EPA's own scientists had recommended.

The energy and manufacturing lobbies worked hard to earn such sympathetic and alarmist press coverage. For the previous six months, they had been furiously feeding the nation's environmental reporters white papers on how the impending regulations were onerous, impractical and unjustified. Industry press releases, using numbers concocted by the creative accountants at PR houses such as Burson-Marsteller and Hill & Knowlton, exclaimed that the cost of further clamping down on smog would tally in the tens of billions and yield negligible environmental benefits. Corporate executives at Chevron, Pacific Gas and Electric, and WMX Technologies warned their shareholders and customers that tougher standards could mean only two things: higher prices and layoffs.

Then, in the wake of the report's release, a squadron of industry lobbyists was deployed to discredit the mounting health data. At the same time, they stressed that the utilities, steel plants and refineries had done all they could do, and that once again the regulatory ax should fall on the motorist and the dry cleaner down the block.

One of the first to attack the science on which the regulations were based was Paul Bailey, health and environmental affairs director at the American Petroleum Institute, the $50-million-a-year trade association for domestic oil companies. Bailey, sounding as if he had just emerged from a seminar at the Tobacco Institute, claimed that urban smog was no big deal and people seemed "actually to adapt to it." On the subject of fine particulates, Bailey asserted that the "science is simply not good enough" to reach any regulatory conclusions.

Using the new air regulations as a pretext, Rep. Tom DeLay of Texas, the former exterminator elevated to House whip, strutted in front of the TV cameras to announce plans to overhaul the Clean Air Act and to strip the EPA of its authority to implement new regulations. DeLay's south Houston district, one of the more toxic in the nation, is packed with oil refineries, incinerators and other industries that would be hit by the new air standards.

Of course, not all of the industry's lobbying activities were quite so confrontational. In order to spread its message to Democratic politicians and Clinton staffers, the American Petroleum Institute secured the services of Beckel and Cowan, a lobbying outfit run by Democratic Party operative—and frequent *Crossfire* co-host—Bob Beckel. The incineration lobby also placed its interests in extremely capable Democratic hands. Browning-Ferris Industries, the nation's second-largest waste disposal company, hired Peter S. Knight, a lawyer and lobbyist with the powerhouse D.C. firm of Wunder, Diefenderfer, Cannon and Thelan. Knight was an aide to Al Gore during his years in the U.S. Senate and served as chair of the Clinton-Gore re-election campaign.

These investments paid off. Since the announcement of the proposed air standards, Browner has gone out of her way to assure industry leaders that the new regulations will not be imposed in anything resembling a draconian manner. Instead, she promises to "work state by state, city by city, and industry by industry to develop a common-sense and cost-effective option for implementation of the standards." The new regulations, she has told industry and municipal leaders, are still works-in-progress—meaning there's a good chance that they will be whittled down even further.

Under the most optimistic scenario, smog-plagued cities won't have to submit plans to meet the new standards until 2002, and even then they won't be held accountable for meeting such standards for another decade. Such solicitousness toward the oil lobby undermines the integrity of the Clean Air Act, which is one of the few environmental laws that instructs the EPA to develop regulations that protect the public health without regard to economic costs.

Worst of all, the new air regulations, weak as they are, exist in a political vacuum. An effective clean-air program depends on a rational and progressive energy policy. Such a policy would actively encourage conservation and the use of clean fuels, more efficient automobiles, new investments in public transportation and a wholesale commitment to renewable and clean power sources, such as wind, geothermal and solar. Instead, the opposite is occurring. The budgets for all of these programs are being savagely slashed and the regulatory framework under which they exist—and, theoretically, at least, could be resurrected—is being steadily dismantled.

So industry seems to have won by its usual tactics of whining, influence-peddling and delay. But what must not be forgotten is that further delay has consequences. Nearly 200 Americans die each day from filthy air. Between now and 2002, when the smog and soot plans are supposed to be in place, air pollution will cost 360,000 lives. As always, the heaviest burden will be borne by the most vulnerable: the elderly, the infirm and inner-city children, who have already been savaged by the welfare bill and pernicious cuts in education, housing and health services. ◀

Jeffrey St. Clair is the environmental editor of *Counterpunch.*

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LABOR

Labor's global agenda

Labor turns to the World Trade Organization to advance workers' rights in the global workplace.

By David Moberg

On December 12, independent union leader Muchtar Pakpahan went on trial for subversion in Indonesia, facing a possible death sentence if convicted. But as the indictment makes clear, Pakpahan is really on trial for such crimes as advocating a higher minimum wage and trying to organize workers who produce the goods and services of the new global economy.

The day Pakpahan's trial began, the World Trade Organization, meeting in nearby Singapore, adopted its first statement of support for core worker rights, now widely defined as the right to organize and bargain collectively and as freedom from forced labor, discrimination and exploitative child labor. The WTO did not take as strong a position as many labor advocates had hoped it would. The group's feeble final resolution asserted that increased trade and trade liberalization would in themselves promote labor rights, and declared that labor standards must not be used for protectionist ends or to question the comparative advantage of low-wage developing countries. Nonetheless, the fact that the WTO made any statement at all on worker rights was a victory for international labor.

The international labor movement insists that protection of core labor rights—which are nearly universally accepted in several U.N. declarations—must be explicitly incorporated into all of the institutions of the global economy. Explicit protections of labor rights would guarantee that workers share more equitably in any economic gains; prevent governments and businesses from seeking a competitive edge through abuse of workers; and give workers a voice in dealing with the awesome forces transforming their lives. Besides protecting workers in developing countries from exploitation, international labor standards could also help prevent erosion of rights already won by workers in advanced economies. Because governments increasingly see foreign exports as the salvation of their national economies, linking observance of labor rights to access to a liberalized global market may make governments take worker rights more seriously as well.

Formed in 1994 during the last round of negotiations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the WTO has emerged as the chief international regulator of the global economy. Since the late '40s, GATT agreements mainly focused on reducing tariffs. But the scope of the WTO is much broader, with agreements or ongoing negotiations on such issues as intellectual property rights, investment and the environment. This expanded menu reflects the priorities of increasingly powerful transnational corporations and the richer industrial countries. It also reflects changes in the world economy: Though trade has grown rapidly in recent years, direct foreign investment has grown much faster, and sales by foreign subsidiaries—such as IBM Japan and Ford Europe—now exceed foreign trade in total value.

But so far, trade ministers have wanted to keep labor rights confined to the International Labor Organization, which has set standards and investigated abuse of worker rights since 1919 but can impose no penalties for violations. Many governments—including conservative governments in rich countries, such as Britain, as well as those in developing countries, such as Egypt, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Mexico and Malaysia—resisted any discussion of labor rights at the WTO's Singapore meeting. Opponents from developing countries even vetoed an address to the conference by the director general of the ILO.

The United States tried unsuccessfully to get the WTO to establish a "working party" to explore the relation of workers' rights to the emerging world economy. Such a group

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could have devised a range of new procedures to deal with labor rights violations. But after several days of closed-door discussions, the European Union gave in to the newly industrialized Asian countries, leaving the United States alone in demanding stronger action on labor. In the end, the WTO ministers promised to renew their commitment to core labor standards, but said the ILO was the "competent body to set and deal with these standards." Even the U.S. delegation seemed to be divided on the issue. Although U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky insisted that labor rights will continue to be discussed, some members of the delegation suggested anonymously that the Clinton administration was pushing worker rights only to pacify the AFL-CIO.

Developing countries claim that the rich countries are trying to exploit labor rights issues as a new form of protectionism, undermining their comparative advantage in global economic competition. These fears, however, are exaggerated. Far from advocating a global minimum wage, labor advocates simply call for protection of core rights that give workers a chance to fight for better conditions. Nor is there much chance that the WTO could turn into a protectionist tool. After all, it's dominated by trade ministers enamored of free markets and effectively subject to the veto power of any member. In practice, the WTO would likely be extremely reluctant to enforce labor rights, given that even one recalcitrant country could block any meaningful action.

Even if core labor rights were vigorously enforced and workers well organized, labor would still be much cheaper in China, Indonesia or Pakistan than in high-wage countries such as the United States. Moreover, a committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—the club of developed countries—concluded last year that developing countries gain no competitive edge from denying workers their rights, and that enforcement of such rights "would strengthen the long-term economic performance of all countries." The study argues that enforcement of core labor rights is likely to increase the efficiency of markets. Its empirical comparisons of economic performance among nations shows few economic disadvantages—and some advantages—for countries that have improved or long supported worker rights. Unions and human rights advocates also argue that workers' rights help strengthen the world economy by more equitably distributing purchasing power, by bolstering democracy and human rights generally, and by helping to assure popular support for liberalized trade.

The major beneficiaries of well-enforced labor rights will likely be workers and governments in developing countries, which will be better able to resist pressures from transnational companies to prohibit or weaken unions. Without such rights, workers' anger over jobs or incomes could turn into resentment of the new global economy itself. Job insecurity is already increasingly common in newly industrialized countries: Within a decade, Hong Kong lost nearly half its factory jobs to nearby Chinese cities, and now companies are moving even further into the Chinese interior in search of ever cheaper, more docile labor. Barshefsky, as well as international labor leaders, warn that unless worker rights are addressed, there could be a growing backlash against the world trading system.

Recognizing that the WTO and globalization are realities whether they like it or not, unions hope to change the rules to strengthen democracy and workers' power. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, with 124 million affiliated members in 136 countries, has made global labor rights a top priority. During the Cold War era, the ICFTU was the major non-communist international labor federation, and Cold War politics often overshadowed its efforts to promote international labor cooperation. Long criticized as offering mostly talk, the ICFTU made a breakthrough with its campaign at the WTO. There, the ICFTU and union representatives from Canada, the United States, Europe and a few developing countries, like Brazil and South Africa, huddled regularly to exchange intelligence, develop strategy and plan lobbying. The ICFTU will try to make labor rights part of the WTO's ongoing reviews of members' trade policies. It also wants the new rules for international investment being negotiated by the OECD to include a labor-rights clause, which could serve as a model for the WTO.

The WTO currently has no provision for collective sanctions. It simply settles disputes between two countries and permits limited retaliation for unfair trade practices. Until there is forceful multilateral protection of labor rights, unilateral action, such as the European Union's recent decision to revoke trade privileges for Burma for its use of forced labor, will continue to play an important role. Many labor advocates argue that the WTO should not allow China to join until it improves its labor rights record, which includes the recent trial of two young labor activists on charges of subversive conspiracy for trying to educate workers about unions.

The OECD, for the first time, took a similar step when it asked South Korea to bolster labor rights as a condition of entry into its ranks. Korea promised to comply, then reneged, triggering nationwide strikes (see "Korean unions stand firm," page 6). The case of Korea is just one example of why, contrary to the panglossian predictions of free-market enthusiasts, free trade and economic growth do not automatically lead to labor rights and a fair distribution of income. Korea has gotten rich, but workers there still must fight for their rights. This is not only a problem of the newly industrialized countries. Labor rights won long ago are now under siege from Europe to New Zealand and the United States.

International protection of labor rights would help workers in countries at all levels of development, but it won't happen without worldwide political and economic pressure. Workers in virtually every country have had to fight hard to win rights. There is little reason to think it will be any easier on a global scale. ◀

David Moberg is researching labor responses to the new global economy with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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BLACK AMERICA

Hooked on Ebonics

African-American leaders are starting to defend the legitimacy of black English.

By Salim Muwakkil

There have been two waves of reactions to the Oakland School Board's decision in December to recognize African-American vernacular English, or "Ebonics," as a distinct language in an effort to counter the disproportionate failure rate of African-American students.

In the first wave, America exploded in condemnation. For a brief moment, there was a cross-racial consensus on Ebonics: It was bad. Civil rights leaders, such as the Rev. Jesse Jackson, NAACP head Kweisi Mfume and the Rev. Al Sharpton, joined cultural leaders Maya Angelou and Ishmael Reed in the initial rush to level maximum scorn at the Oakland board's action. Jackson, for example, dismissed the action as an "unacceptable surrender borderlining on disgrace." Teaching Ebonics, he said, was "teaching down to our children and must never happen."

Many black publications, especially those oriented to middle-class readers, were also hostile to the Ebonics resolution. Hermene Hartman, the African-American editor-in-chief and publisher of *N'Digo*, a black-owned Chicago publication that caters to the city's black middle class, wrote an impassioned editorial on the issue. "Ebonics is clearly a step backwards. ... Want to hear the doctor tell you in Ebonics what the cure is for those pains in your chest?" she asked. "Why not also resurrect the images of Amos & Andy, Stepin Fetchit, Mammy, Little Black Sambo, The Minstrel, rolling dark eyes dancing the instant jig, and the cotton fields where we were 100 percent employed, well-fed and happy."

White America was virtually unanimous in deriding Ebonics as well. Publications and politicians across the ideological spectrum denounced the idea. The *New York Times* dismissed what it called inner-city speech and warned that by validating such "urban slang," the Oakland board "will actually stigmatize African-Amerian children." The Clinton administration announced that no federal money would be available to fund classroom instruction for Ebonics. "Elevating black English to the status of a language is not the way to raise standards of achievement in our schools," said Secretary of Education Richard Riley.

Now a second wave engulfs us, in which black and white Americans seem to be returning to their familiar, racially-polarized positions. "This Ebonics debate is really about power and culture," said Conrad Worrill, chair of the National Black United Front, the country's largest secular black nationalist group. "This is an attack on our culture, when we have white people deciding that our indigenous modes of expression are deficient, worthy of ridicule, or so-called bad English." Worrill spoke after a January 13 news conference at which he and several other of Chicago's leading black activists expressed their support for the Oakland board's action and denounced the widespread attacks on Ebonics as a tactic of "cultural and educational genocide."

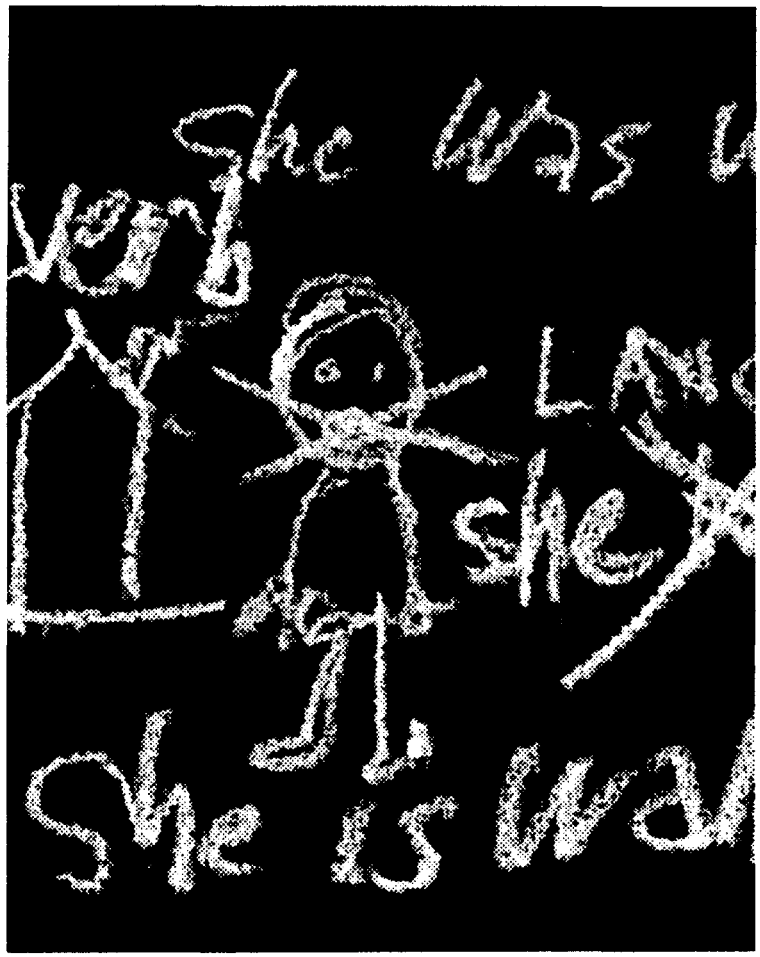
The Ebonics uproar began on December 18, when the Oakland School Board approved a policy that "recognizes the existence and the cultural and historic bases of West and Niger-Congo African Language Systems (or Ebonics) ... as the predominately primary language of African-American students." The resolution was based on the work of a specially appointed task force that after a six-month review offered a series of recommendations designed to enhance the academic performance of all students.

Black students have not been faring well in the Oakland public school district: African-Americans, who comprise 53 percent of the district's student population, make up 71 percent of the special-education students, 67 percent of the tru-

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ants and 80 percent of those suspended. African-American students have an average grade-point average of 1.8 on a 4-point scale—the lowest of all students in the district.

The task force came out strongly in favor of the Standard English Proficiency Program (SEP), a state of California model program that promotes English-language development for African-American students by training teachers and administrators to respect and acknowledge the history, culture and language that the black student brings to the classroom.



It was the board's language stressing the linguistic legitimacy of Ebonics that provoked the firestorm. The clause that read "African Language Systems are genetically based and not a dialect of English" triggered derision from blacks who compared it to the racist canard of blacks' genetic inferiority. As it turns out, the use of the word "genetic" in that context is commonplace in linguistic literature. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines genetic as "relating to or determined by the origin, development, or causal antecedents of something." Those semantic subtleties, however, were lost on the mainstream media, which took the Ebonics story and ran wild with it.

Much of the opposition to the Oakland board's Ebonics policy is rooted in the widespread misconception that the board intended to teach Ebonics to the students. In fact, the board's resolution characterizes Ebonics as a legitimate language system with its own rules of grammar and morphology, mandates teacher training in it, and urges that it be used to enhance students' mastery of standard English.

Worrill and like-minded activists argue that cultural imperialism fuels much white opposition to Ebonics. That view is partially supported by linguists who note that distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate languages are arbitrary and a function of political or cultural decisions. Stanford University linguist Merrit Ruhlen puts it this way: "If history had gone differently and Africans had come over and founded America and raided Europe and brought white slaves over and this country ended up with a 10 percent white minority that was kept in ghettos and spoke white English, you'd find the same problems in reverse."

African-American nationalists argue that much black opposition to the concept is motivated by the same shame many blacks feel about thick lips, kinky hair and other African characteristics historically demeaned by white culture. "Why else would so many black people be so eager to belittle a linguistic pearl like Ebonics, if it's not self-hatred?" Worrill asks.

Just as African-Americans have been taught to gauge physical beauty according to its likeness to Caucasian features, they also share white Americans' disdain for black cultural products. Groups of mostly middle-class African-Americans, tagged "image police" by one wag, once denigrated the blues as lowbred debauchery. They initially tried to ban gospel, Thomas Dorsey's rhythmic creation, from church. They denounced and sought to censor the jagged unorthodoxies of bebop jazz. And they are up to their old tricks again in a campaign against hip-hop.

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What critics of the Oakland board's action have decried as "bad English" is the unique creation of a people systematically deprived of their native tongues, yet forbidden from officially learning the language of their captors. From those constraints, African-Americans fashioned a rich American dialect, even while forcibly isolated from the American mainstream. Several studies show that the African-American dialect is similar to the West African-based language patterns of blacks in various Caribbean countries and the Gullah islands off the coasts of Georgia and the Carolinas.

But even if Ebonics had no African pedigree, the Oakland board's decision would still be valid. Prominent sociolinguist William Labov conducted a study that found that the dialects spoken by poor urban blacks in the Northeast and the Midwest are diverging dramatically from standard English even as they become more internally uniform. Labov concluded that this separate linguistic evolution stems from the high degree of segregation imposed on blacks in the United States, which effectively isolates the black poor from

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mainstream employment and other meaningful contact with the dominant culture. Sociologist and author Douglas S. Massey coined the term "hypersegregation" to describe the extent of residential segregation in contemporary America.

The Oakland board's resolution was an attempt to deal with this distressing reality. Board members felt that if teachers learned to think of Ebonics as a legitimate language system, they would be less likely to devalue their black students who, because of hypersegregation, speak only black English.

Taken aback by the maelstrom it created, the Oakland board has tried to explain its actions and clear up any misunderstanding. It revised the resolution by extracting the controversial words "genetically based." The new version states, "African Language Systems have origins in West (African) and Niger-Congo languages and are not merely dialects of English." Oakland board officials insisted they were not backing down from their original intention to train teachers to recognize the linguistic legitimacy of Ebonics.

In the meantime, Jackson and Angelou are having second thoughts about their initial reproach. Jackson now supports the Oakland board. "They never intended to teach black English as many initially thought," he says. "The board is urging teachers to detect ungrammatical language patterns in students and correct them in order that they can be academically and occupationally competitive."

Jackson came under withering criticism for having spoken out earlier against the board's action. "It's unfortunate that Jesse Jackson made such intemperate remarks about Ebonics," says Maulana Karenga, creator of the Kwanzaa holiday and a pioneering theorist of black cultural nationalism. "And this is especially ironic since he himself is a main speaker of Ebonics." Karenga insists that "Ebonics fulfills all the requirements for a language in terms of lexicon, phonics, syntax, morphology and pragmatics."

Most experts agree that Ebonics is a legitimate mode of communication. During its annual meeting in Chicago in early January, the Linguistic Society of America formalized that consensus when it passed a resolution validating Ebonics and supporting the Oakland board. Devaluing Ebonics as "slang" or "broken English" is "incorrect and demeaning," the resolution reads. "The Oakland School Board's decision to recognize the vernacular of African-American students in teaching them standard English is linguistically and pedagogically sound."

Although the Linguistic Society traditionally avoids taking political positions, the group's executive committee thought the Oakland board's action had been so thoroughly misreported that it had a duty to help clarify the issue. "People used to believe that African-American English was illogical, poorly constructed and inadequate for any cognitive or linguistic growth," John Rickford, a Stanford University professor and member of the society's governing board, told the *Washington Post*. "This is the same view we're hearing now from some white people who are upset that this should get any quarter in the schools. But while it is certainly different from standard English, it is not inferior." Rickford said Ebonics meets all the requirements necessary for linguistic legitimacy.

Rep. Pete King, however, is not convinced. The New York Republican introduced a bill on January 9 to bar federal money for school programs using black English. "Ebonics is the product of radical political correctness and ridiculous Afrocentrism," King says. "It is a racial stew of inner-city street slang and bad grammar. It is not a language."

King's contempt for the Oakland plan is the kind of white reaction that has led growing numbers of black leaders to support the legitimacy of Ebonics. "The Ebonics debate is the perfect issue to spark the next phase of the black movement," says Worrill. "It nicely embodies issues of white supremacy and black self-hatred and demonstrates their relevance to the educational process of African-Americans."

Stay tuned.

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IN PRINT

Faulty towers

By Jordan Marsh

"Chicago is the great American city," Norman Mailer could still write after the 1968 Democratic National Convention. "Perhaps it is the last of the great American cities."

Nearly 30 years later, another local disaster has provoked a very different response. For architecture critic and college professor Ross Miller, the Windy City is defined not by stockyards or rioters or even convention centers, but by a three-acre parcel of land in the heart of downtown—an entire city block known by planners as Block 37 and by thousands of others as, depending on the season, a skating rink or a student art gallery. This huge empty lot, bounded by State, Dearborn, Randolph and Washington streets, is the subject of Miller's book, *Here's the Deal: The Buying and Selling of a Great American City.*

Until 1989, Block 37 was a varied collection of late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings where Chicagoans came to pursue every sort of activity, from shopping for gourmet foods at the Stop & Shop grocery store to catching a movie at the United Artists Theater. This piece of land was something of a repository of Chicago history. Legendary attorney Clarence Darrow reportedly had an office on the block at one time, in the same building that later housed the campaign headquarters of both Harold Washington and Richard M. Daley. Mayor's Row restaurant, on the ground floor, was reputedly a rendezvous for countless political payoffs.

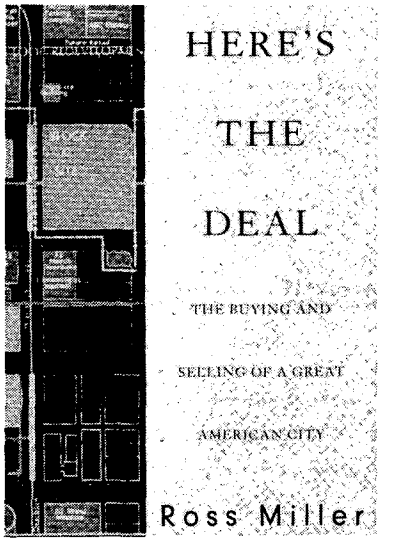
Despite its charming pedigree and fine architecture, including a designated landmark, Block 37 was in the cross hairs throughout the '70s and '80s for a simple reason: It was old at a time when Chicago was trying to get newer. As early as 1973, developers and city officials saw the block as the keystone of Chicago's future—provided, of course, that its ancient "blighted" buildings could be razed and replaced by a shiny new office and retail complex. Nestled strategically between the commercial juggernauts of State Street and the government complexes of City Hall and the Civic Center (now the Richard J. Daley Center), Block 37 meant the same thing to many different people: fame and fortune. Politicians and developers alike coveted the opportunity to play a historic role in the revitalization of Chicago's downtown, to be known as a city-builder, a modern-day Daniel Burnham. City officials expected the tax revenue and jobs produced by the new complex to be a tremendous boon to the city, while developers savored the prospect of a potentially staggering windfall.

As we know, it didn't turn out quite that way. While five successive mayors sporadically attempted to seize control of the block through eminent domain, a succession of developers spent millions on speculative architectural renderings as they waited. The city's inactivity created a vacuum that allowed developers to act as if they were in charge of the entire North Loop, hopelessly blurring the line between public and private authority.

In 1983, the city accepted a $12.5 million bid to purchase the rest of Block 37 from a trio of real estate powerhouses that, in a partnership known as FJV, already owned a quarter of the block. Though the city did not yet control the land, it locked in the purchase price for FJV. City officials then watched helplessly as acquisition costs skyrocketed to nearly $40 million, resulting in a $27 million subsidy to the developers. In 1989, when the city finally acquired title to the block's remaining buildings, planners were determined to cut their losses and proceed with demolition. At the prompting of FJV, the city even agreed to withdraw landmark status from the 1872 McCarthy Building so that it, too, could be demolished—an unprecedented step.

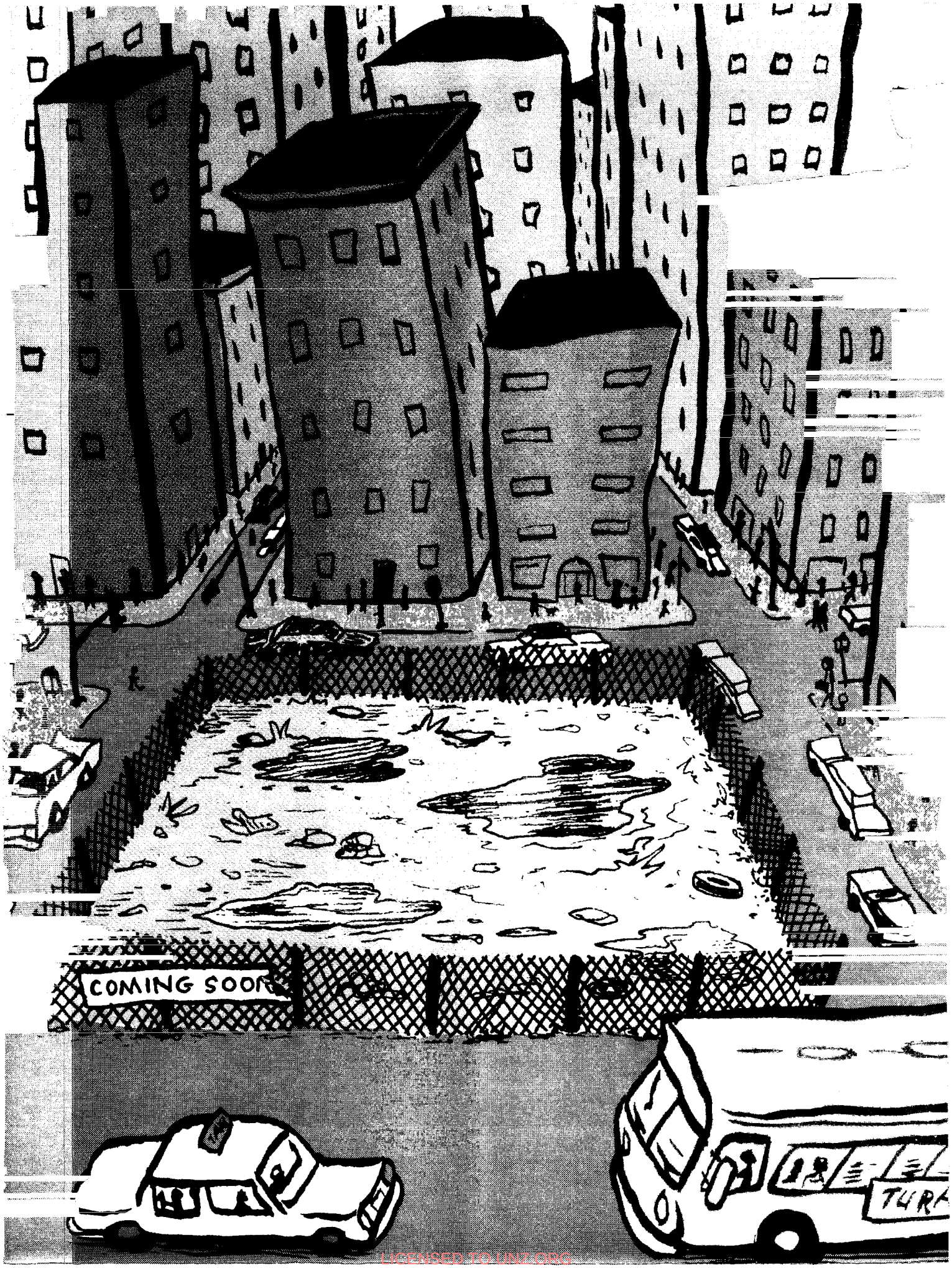
Yet FJV wasn't happy either, having invested literally millions of dollars in Block 37 with nothing to show for it. A lawsuit filed by preservationists to halt demolition of the McCarthy Building meant further delays; by the time the block was cleared—except for a Com Ed power station, deemed too expensive to relocate—the commercial real estate market had collapsed, making redevelopment of the block impossible. The city's unintended abdication of its planning role to private developers had been a tremendous bust. On Chicago's West Side, massive disinvestment following the 1968 riots had left a landscape littered with vacant lots. Now, in the middle of downtown, a huge infusion of capital produced the same result.

How could this happen? What had to break down for a failure of this magnitude to occur? And what does the fate of Block 37 imply for the future of big American



Here's the Deal: The Buying and Selling of a Great American City
By Ross Miller
Alfred A. Knopf
316 pages, $27.50

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cities? These questions beg to be explored in a book like *Here's the Deal.* And they are—sort of.

To begin with, Miller takes on the usual suspects: politics, greed, vanity, ambition. Much of *Here's the Deal* reads like a who's who of Chicago's wheelers and dealers, from the hopelessly corrupt to the fatally naive. Surely, a city of hustlers and schemers, which Chicago has always been, can expect a big deal to go bad at some point.

Miller also describes the get-rich-quick real estate environment of the late '70s and '80s, in which land was a sure path to wealth and glory. The new style of real estate transactions was based on quick turnover and huge profit margins rather than personal relationships and slow, steady growth. For a while, established banks were as susceptible as real estate gamblers to the big-money fever. Even among regular Americans, land and housing had suddenly become a speculative investment. Homes were refinanced, homeowners took out never-to-be-repaid balloon mortgages, and second mortgages allowed houses to become collateral to fund other investments or consumer spending. A home was no longer just a roof, but a way to get richer.

These important pieces of the puzzle are all discussed thoroughly in *Here's the Deal.* But one gets the feeling they aren't what drew Miller to the story of Block 37. After reading his book, it's clear that he simply doesn't like modern urban society and the direction it has taken. In the conflict between what he calls the two Chicagos—"the gritty mercantile and industrial reality" and "the genteel, fanciful, planned fragments, visible everyday on a bike ride near the lake"—Miller is passionately committed to the former.

In what can be a difficult book to get through, given the long, overly detailed biographies of even minor players and the near-incomprehensible descriptions of the minutiae of real estate finance in the '80s, Miller writes most clearly when he focuses on the class issue. For instance, Miller has little use for the people who occupy modern high-rise office buildings. He calls architect Helmut Jahn's postmodern designs "perfect for an audience raised in the suburbs and nurtured in adulthood by David Letterman and *Saturday Night Live.* In the middle of a wild economic boom, the post-Vietnam generation had returned to the downtown to work for awhile, just for the bucks." As for modern high-rise buildings themselves, they're just "one box on top of the other. The joke is that these 50-story stacks of minimal boxes, all essentially the same inside as Ramada Inns, are dedicated to making money out of air. No product is ever manufactured; nothing tangible is ever produced."

Here's the Deal is a eulogy for the kind of downtown that, for Miller, the old Block 37 represented. Miller blames architects like Mies van der Rohe, among others, for killing those downtowns. His glass lobbies "mediated between two elements, providing transition from the foul street to the elegant upper reaches. The new space, treated with conditioned air for its own atmosphere, was marketed at a premium to accountants, lawyers, and the expanding financial markets, all rising in place of the bawdy American industrial city." In the end, it is not Block 37 that he mourns, but the transformation of urban economies from a manufacturing to a service base.

Miller's fundamental argument is with modern white-collar office buildings themselves—not just how they're financed, designed or built, but *that they exist at all.* Such a critique, while interesting, has little to do with the causes or implications of Block 37's failed redevelopment.

Miller could easily have drawn a very different lesson from his own thoughtful history of the block. Chiding 19th-century architecture critic Colin Rowe for his "aristocratic prejudice against middle-class business," he writes that "architecture is, in a city of traders, simply another precious commodity, requiring an efficient market to cash it out. Piers and spandrels cut the meat vertically and horizontally so space could be sold more efficiently from the ground up." Rowe, writes Miller, "missed the irony that commercial architecture in Chicago was the city's highest original art form as a direct result of its speculative impulse, not in spite of it. ... Speculation made visible through architecture *is* the city's 'poetic bias.' "

The beauty of cities is that they are organic. They reflect the unfettered reality of American life, in every imaginable aspect. Just as commercial architecture reflected the speculative business of 19th-century Chicago, so 20th-century architecture, including modernist and postmodernist buildings, reflects the operation of that same speculative market today. It would be perverse and foolish for contemporary architecture to tailor buildings to a time that no longer exists. For better or worse, Chicago's architecture remains the city's poetic bias.

In the book's final chapter, Miller returns to the putative subject of his book: Block 37 and its implications. Chicago and similar American cities, he writes, are in a state of permanent decline. The commercial real estate crash will continue indefinitely, and cities dependent on revenue from their large office buildings will soon be filled with "massive plywooded towers" as those buildings fail. Before long, what's left of the urban middle class will vacate. "As the old city fills up with a dispossessed underclass, the achieving side of the bell curve" will create new cities on the periphery, and "the city as it has been celebrated for most of human history" will face extinction.

Whether or not one accepts this apocalyptic vision, there is much wisdom in *Here's the Deal.* When the public and private sectors each try to outwit the other, both may end up losing spectacularly. Make no mistake, however, the really big loss is on the public side. Miller estimates that over $100 million was wasted on this large plot of land. Even in a city built on real estate gambles, Block 37 was a disaster of unprecedented proportions. If nothing else, it should be a cautionary tale of the dangers to cities when public and private roles are not clearly delineated. ◀

Jordan Marsh is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

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Suits in the vanguard

By Gina Neff

To those who regard the 1994 elections as an ugly revolutionary moment in American politics, the recent stampede of books defending liberalism and the left must seem like the arrival of the cavalry. All these books ask the same question: How can the left regain the political power it lost? Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, the authors of *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda*, have a new answer.

"Our guiding premise," they write in their introduction, "is that America works best when it receives a roughly equal infusion of ideas from the right and the left." Over the last 15 years, that balance of ideas has been thrown out of whack by the rash of right-wing think tanks and conservative foundations actively staking out ideological positions on social issues that had once been liberals' home turf. So in an attempt to get lost liberals back on track, Stefancic and Delgado draw a political atlas of this territory, mapping how right-wingers went from victory to victory in conservative campaigns on immigration, race, affirmative action, welfare, tort reform, official English and campus multiculturalism.

This road travels straight through the public sphere and civil society into what the authors call "the arena of dialogic politics," where policy is decided through democratic negotiation. Conservatives, who argue from a clear set of principles and put their money behind their dogma, are more influential—and have less need to compromise—than liberals. "The conservatives' refusal to compromise ... weakens deliberative democracy because their intransigence removes certain items from the realm of ends or teleology," write Stefancic and Delgado. "Their basic program turns out to be beyond discussion because it is ordained by a higher authority, a higher principle."

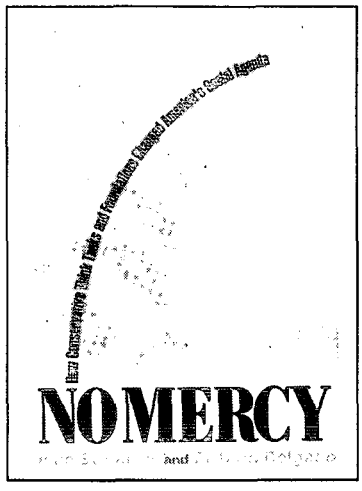
Stefancic and Delgado, research associate and professor, respectively, at the University of Colorado Law School, focus on the right-wing organizations that pump out research reports and grandstand in the media. Their goal is to show how the right stealthily gained control of the country's social agenda through "dedication, economy of effort, and sheer ingenuity," and to show how the left can regain it.

The specter of right-wing foundations haunting the smoky back rooms of politics conveniently scares most liberals, including Stefancic and Delgado, away from the facts: Those horrible ultra-right bogeymen, the Olin and Scaife foundations, don't even make the top 100 in terms of the amount of money given away. They pass out between $11 million and $14 million a year, compared to the Ford Foundation's monolithic $285 million. But only a tiny portion of the money liberal and mainstream foundations give out is spent on public affairs programs.

What's so special about right-wing foundations? Almost without exception, they are small, family-controlled organizations with a strong connection to the original donors and their values. By contrast, liberal foundations—liberal in their commitment not only to social justice but also to political neutrality—stay away from politics, opting instead for action-oriented projects or apolitical or centrist research.

Structurally, all foundations are conservative, saving yesterday's profits for tomorrow's politics. The fuzzy myth of benevolent industrialists and their generous liberal philanthropies conveniently forgets the intentions of the megafoundations' founders—keeping the business in the family without paying taxes on it (Ford), getting back at one's ne'er-do-well kids by leaving them skint (MacArthur), or getting Congress to drop a tax-evasion investigation (Carnegie). Accountable to no one but the IRS and their own boards, foundations represent the ultimate privatization of social services and research. Little wonder that some conservatives—most glamorously, Arianna Huffington—call for foundation-subsidized philanthropy to replace government services like welfare and Head Start.

Trading in a market of ideology, foundations shape the way we think about public goods and who provides them. Proof can be found in how many on the left look to foundations—with hefty stock portfolios, a can-do capitalist attitude and boards that read like a who's who of the business world—to lead the struggle for social change. Stockholders and suits as the vanguard? As Indiana University professor Robert F. Arnove wrote in *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism*, "Foundations have promoted modes of inquiry that circumscribe the examina-



No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda
By Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado
Temple University Press
227 pp., $27.95

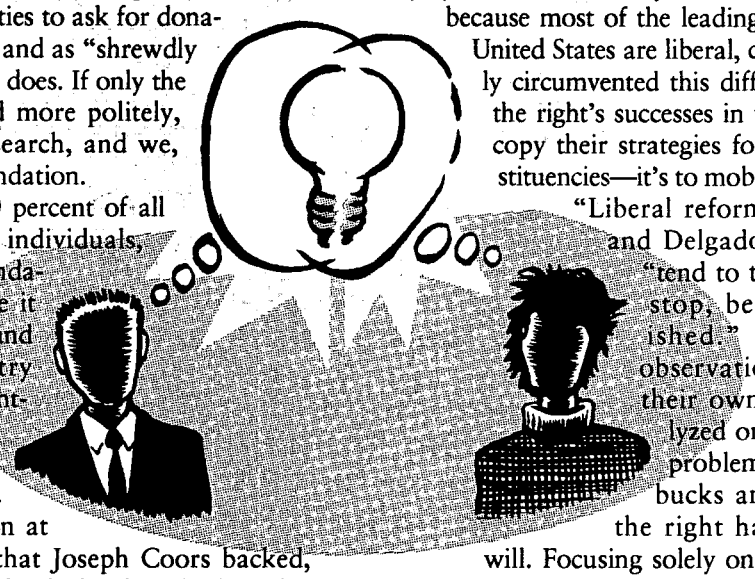
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tion of value questions and ideological issues." Foundations' priorities are grounded in the notion of Christian charity: They prefer to focus on the needy themselves rather than on the institutional changes. Excluding the handful of small foundations committed to progressive social change, most liberal foundations try to solve distinct social problems, not build class-oriented politics. Instead of questioning why liberals don't use their money on policy, Stefancic and Delgado simply counsel lefties to ask for donations as "often and insistently" and as "shrewdly and professionally" as the right does. If only the liberal do-gooders were asked more politely, they would give to policy research, and we, too, could have a Heritage Foundation.

But it just isn't so. Over 80 percent of all charitable giving comes from individuals, not from corporations or foundations. This figure should make it clear how chimerical Stefancic and Delgado's hoped-for symmetry between left and right is. Right-wing organizations control much more wealth because the wealthy are their constituency. Stefancic and Delgado mention at various points in their book that Joseph Coors backed, founded or provided start-up funds for five think tanks, including the Heritage Foundation, the Council for National Policy—a right-wing doppelganger of the Council on Foreign Relations—and the Washington Legal Foundation, which provides legal muscle for the anti-affirmative-action movement. What the authors do not do is analyze the concentration of wealth and power behind conservative think tanks and ask how—and whether—the left can duplicate it.

But even if money weren't an issue, the strategies used by groups like the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute wouldn't work for the left. In Stefancic and Delgado's view of the world, liberals' social policy prescriptions could, with the proper infusion of cash and media savvy, get the same spin as those of the Heritage Foundation. All liberal lobbying efforts need is for policymakers to read lefty briefcase analyses on their commute between the Hill and National Airport and listen to progressive scholars freed from the demands of university life engaging in public debates. But there already are several left think tanks doing excellent work on pressing political issues, yet it's seldom translated into policy. Stefancic and Delgado's single-minded focus on dueling position papers in the arena of dialogic politics leaves them with little to say about why Cato, for instance, and not the Economic Policy Institute, has set the terms of debate on Social Security reform. It's a safe bet Wall Street backing had more to do with it than "thematic coherence."

This isn't to say that there shouldn't be any left-wing policy organizations, nor that there isn't a lesson to be learned from the way the right has established theirs. But we need to shift our gaze from foundation-subsidized intellectuals to the constituencies behind them. Right-wingers have been very successful at mobilizing their base. Less than 20 years old, the Washington Legal Foundation, for example, receives support from over 400 of the 1,000 largest corporations in America. The Republican think-tank boom of the '70s, ironically, was an answer to the liberalism of the university system, as *No Mercy*'s authors recognize: "Precisely because most of the leading social scientists in the United States are liberal, conservatives have neatly circumvented this difficulty." The answer to the right's successes in the policy wars isn't to copy their strategies for mobilizing their constituencies—it's to mobilize our own.



"Liberal reformers," write Stefancic and Delgado in their conclusion, "tend to take one step and then stop, believing the task finished." Unfortunately, this observation applies exactly to their own work. They've analyzed only a part of the larger problem, stopping short of the bucks and the rolodexes that the right has and the left never will. Focusing solely on the fact that the right has been able to outspend the left with deeper coffers, Stefancic and Delgado can't offer any better advice than "Keep trying!" Without acknowledging the importance of political clout and organizing, they can't realistically address the right's ascendancy to power or potential counterattacks by the left.

For example, they challenge the reader to think of "a single program (since the virtual demise of the Peace Corps)" that trains young progressives for policy debates and teaches them techniques for campus activism. Okay, how about the University Conversion Project, mentioned only parenthetically and not even in the context of its organizing efforts against Proposition 187 or its successful Campus Action Networks? On a shoestring budget, UCP has taught campus activists how to publish alternative campus newspapers, uncover their universities' military contracts and network with others across the country. It's a far cry from the Coors-backed Leadership Institute, with its Student Publications School, Youth Leadership School and 10,000 graduates (including Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell and Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad), but barring a mass conversion of the wealthy to liberal causes, UCP and grass-roots organizations like it are the best hope we have.

"As a counterproposal to philanthropy," Antonio Gramsci wrote, "let us offer solidarity, organization." The left will never come out ahead in the money game. Progressives can win despite that, but not by looking to think tanks' tangle of money and influence as a viable model of political power. ◀

Gina Neff is a freelance writer based in New York, who writes regularly on economic issues.

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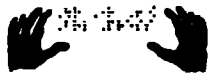
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Continued from page 40

minutes. "There's a mirror and I show how to hook the bra. 'No, no, no, you're supposed to wiggle like a girl, do it better!' I tell them. 'Now you're all dressed up, and I'm going to teach you how to walk in your heels, and then we're going to go to the West Side Highway and sell you.' "

They don't actually go, of course. "It's all verbal," Sarah says. "It's all in their heads." Her clients are usually older men, 45 years old and up. Some have "an elaborate fantasy that will somehow culminate in foot rubbing or smelling or whatever they have in mind, which sounds better than it actually is." Many men want to be spanked; some want to be peed on. Some have rape fantasies and want to be penetrated with a dildo. "That's my closest contact," Sarah tells me.

Most sessions end with the client masturbating. After that, "There are two reactions. It's either, 'Gee, now I'm sheepish and ashamed and have to run away,' or they're much more normal and get dressed at a less frantic pace. Even people I see on a regular basis will be shy and embarrassed. But I like to think that they're looking forward to this. They come back, so they must be."

One major advantage to dominance, besides the flexible hours, is that it travels well. Sarah carries a pager so clients can reach her at any time. For the right price, she'll accompany a client to, say, New Orleans for the weekend. All over the world, there are men eager for the sting of a hairbrush. "Any place with a booming economy," she says, "is a good place to work." She speaks French and German fluently, and can get by in Spanish, Italian and Japanese.

Sarah won't tell me exactly how much she makes, as it varies from client to client. "The set price of a dungeon might be a couple of hundred bucks an hour," of which she gets half. "Anything private is more expensive." Paying taxes can be tricky. "A lot of it's just not documentable. Some dungeons take credit cards, and then you get paid by check. You get a W-2 form for that." What does she list as her occupation? "I've been a 'student' for a long time. Also 'entertainer,' which puts you in a filing-quarterly category." Unlike some dominatrices she knows, Sarah doesn't use an accountant: "My mother is very helpful."

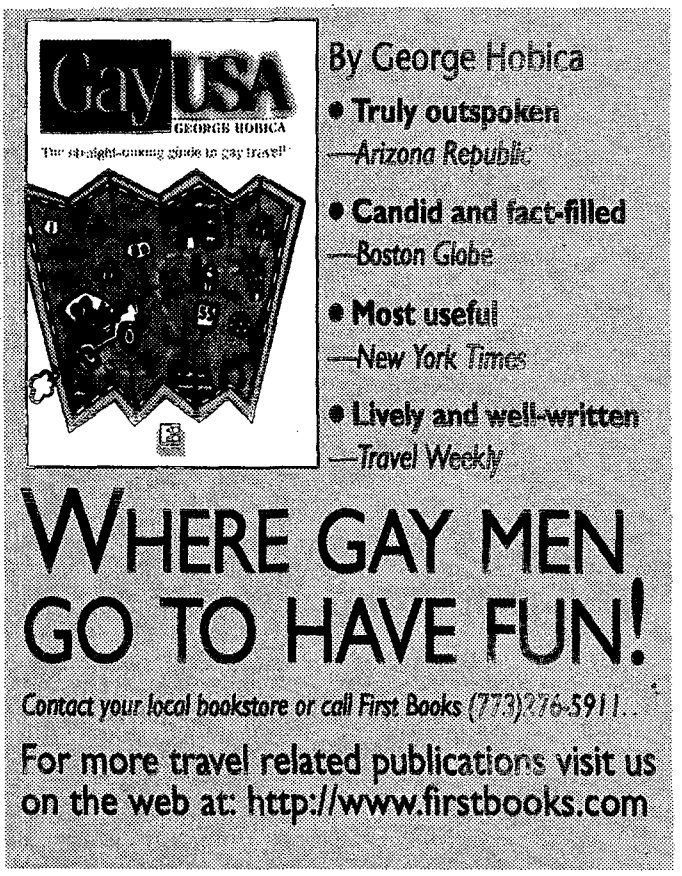
I ask what her mother thinks of her work. "She doesn't understand S&M, why anyone would want it and want it enough to pay for it," Sarah says. "She was sort of bemused." The only people who don't know what she does are her brother-in-law and her boyfriend's parents. Her boyfriend, a baker, is mostly concerned for her safety. "When I'm working alone, I always make sure people know where I am. I try to deal only with people who have been referred to me by other sex workers. If it's someone calling in response to an ad, I'll ask, 'Do you work in an office? Is this your real name? Can I call your voice mail?' The ones who aren't amenable to that, I don't deal with. It makes me very cautious, and that's good."

Finding out whom to avoid is one of the benefits of participation in Prostitutes of New York, the city's sex-worker support organization, of which Sarah is an active member. In all her years of work, she has never been hurt. The hostility she does experience "only happens with young guys—men in their 20s or early 30s—if they think that they're going to have sex afterwards. 'Goodbye! Here's half your money back.' I prefer to deal with someone who understands that this is just what it is—services rendered for money."

And that money does more than pay her rent. Though at first it was hard for me to believe, Sarah clearly has considerable respect for both her clients and herself. On top of that, she says, "It's a good way to vent frustration. I don't fight with my family at all." Still, I can't help wondering if it ever gets to her. "There are times when I've felt degraded, but never as much as when I had a straight job. I was a high school teacher for two years after I finished college. I thought I should get a job with a pension plan and benefits that I could tell my grandmother about, and I was just wrong."

What will she do once she has her degree? "I want to leave academia and make international women's health policy. There's a project in Nigeria setting up clinics. They're run by sex workers, who pool money and deal with doctors on their own terms." At that point, she'll give up dominance. "I don't know that I'd miss the actual work," Sarah says. "But I'd miss a lot of the people." ◁

Lawrence Levi is an associate editor at *Art & Antiques*.



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IN THE END

It's a dom's life

By Lawrence Levi

"It was something I thought about for a while, and then did for a while before I told many of my friends," Sarah says. "I thought, 'What can I do that's not illegal?' "

Sarah's a dominatrix. We're having tea in her Manhattan studio apartment on a bright December afternoon. On her coffee table by our teacups are books by Melville and Marx and the latest issue of *Whorezine*. Professionally, she's Delilah White—"Miss White" or "Mistress Delilah" to you. She's 27 and extremely poised. She has straight, brown, shoulder-length hair, blue-gray eyes and a lovely, if intimidatingly assured, smile.

Sarah (I've changed her name) used to work full-time as a dominatrix, but now that she's studying for her doctorate, she's reduced her hours. She doesn't have sex with her clients; some of them don't even want to be touched. Her job—within certain limits—is to do, or be, whatever they want. "I'm Zelig," she says. "I tell them whatever they want to hear. If they want me to be 6 years old, I will tell them that I'm 6."

She's getting her degree in sociology, with a focus on sex work. "Everything I've read by sociologists and scholars on the sex industry has missed something," she says, "something that could be clarified if they were inside rather than outside." At academic conferences, she delivers papers like "Stigma Within Sex Work" and "Caught Looking: Strippers Return the Gaze." One client, whom she's been seeing for several years, knows she is a student: "He reads my papers before I turn them in—we have similar academic interests. He has a regular job in an office. Together we do variations on a rape fantasy, where he wants to be violated and humiliated."

Sarah grew up in New York. In high school she aspired to be a cryptologist, and she went on to major in linguistics at an Ivy League school. (She takes down her diploma, which hangs in the bathroom, when clients visit.) While taking time off from college, she found her work as a part-time museum educator just didn't pay the rent: "There's not a lot of work for a 19-year-old with limited typing skills." So she took her first job at a dungeon. She had a mentor—"a woman there that I got along with"—to show her the ropes. "She would say, 'Deal with it this way. Do you know what he likes? He's a regular here, this is what he's into.' "

For our chat, Sarah wears a turtleneck dress and black stockings, through which the octopus tattoo that covers most of the front of her left thigh is hazily visible. For work, she'll change into the customary dom uniform of leather corset and high heels. Sometimes, though, she just works in whatever she has on. Anything in black or red will do, as long as it fits the fantasy her client wants to act out. Sarah knows every scenario: teacher and naughty student, boss and employee, parent and child, pimp and prostitute. "These fantasies are much more articulated and less ambiguous than 'I just want to look at pretty girls,' " she says. "There's a lot more structure."

When she's not working at a dungeon, Sarah supplies her own tools: a pair of shoes, nipple clamps, rubber gloves, lube, a hairbrush. "Or if I know someone wants me to bring stuff for them to wear, I'll carry furry panties in a man's size, bondage equipment, shackles." A lot of her equipment, like clothespins for nipple clamps, can be picked up at hardware and medical supply stores.

"The doctor's office medical fantasy comes up all the time," Sarah says. "It means I'm wearing a white lab coat and a stethoscope and have some scary-looking metal things around. It's not, 'Tell me where it hurts.' It's, 'Tell me where you want it to hurt.' "

I ask what it takes to be a good dominatrix. "Being careful is the most important thing. Not being judgmental is a close second." Yesterday, Sarah tells me, each of her three clients wanted to be dressed up like a girl, in lingerie, panties, stockings, garter belt, corset, basic makeup and maybe a dress. All that lacing and fitting often takes up much of the typical session's 45 to 60

Continued on page 39



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